

King, Arafat discuss peace process

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat telephoned King Hussein Saturday to discuss the state of the peace process after the latest mission by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, the official news service Wafa said. President Arafat called King Hussein "to discuss the latest developments in the peace process and exchange viewpoints on matters of mutual interest," Wafa reported. The Palestinian cabinet, meeting with Mr. Arafat Friday in the West Bank town of Ramallah, warned that Israel was taking the peace process "to the brink of explosion" with its hardline stance on settlements and on the magnitude of West Bank troop pullback. Mr. Ross left the region Saturday.

U.S. aircraft carrier to head for Gulf

TOKYO (AFP) — The U.S. aircraft carrier Independence is being sent to the Gulf from its home port in Japan as part of the U.S. response to Iraq's refusal to allow comprehensive U.N. weapons inspections, a report said Saturday. The Independence will replace the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Nimitz due to return to the U.S. in March, Jiji Press said quoting a communication between U.S. forces and the Japanese government. The report could not be immediately confirmed by the U.S. forces in Japan or the Japanese defence agency. The U.S. Defence Department has said it will keep two aircraft carriers, each leading a battle group, in the Gulf during the stand-off between Baghdad and the U.N. over inspections of Iraq's suspected weapons of mass-destruction.

U.S. troops land in Kuwait for routine exercises

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — About 1,500 U.S. troops are being deployed here for routine military exercises with the Kuwaiti army, the American embassy said Saturday. Transport planes arrived here from the United States unloading the troops ready for the joint manoeuvres, codenamed Intrinsic Action 98, the embassy said. The 1,500-strong battalion task force will use equipment pre-positioned at Camp Doha, west of Kuwait City. The soldiers, who began arriving two days earlier, will be based at a desert firing range. The exercises are to boost cooperation between the two forces in line with a defence pact signed after the 1991 Gulf war, the embassy said.

Sick chickens slaughtered in Morocco

RABAT (AFP) — Police have destroyed more than 600 sick chickens and arrested two people who tried to sell the poultry on the streets of Rabat, a government spokesman said on Saturday. "A veterinary examination revealed that the chickens [from a farm near Sale, northern Morocco] were suffering from infectious bronchitis and stress," the spokesman said. Poultry accounts for 40 per cent of all meat intake in Morocco, where chicken is a popular dish for Muslims when they break their daily fast during Ramadan, which began at the end of December.

Monthly report on Israeli press appears in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The first edition of the monthly Beirut-based "Israeli Directions," containing translated extracts from the Hebrew-language press, appeared Saturday in Beirut. The bulletin is published by the Centre for Strategic Studies, Research and Documentation here, which focuses on Arab-Israeli relations. The 50-page report concentrates on changes in Israeli society and contains translated excerpts from Israeli newspapers and magazines. "Our goal is to familiarise Arab readers with the facts about Israeli society, which we cannot ignore because of its influence in the region," said Hani Abdullah of the "Israeli Directions" editing staff. The centre also publishes the monthly "Middle East Affairs" magazine and weekly "Israeli Affairs" bulletin.

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Egypt warns Israel to reconsider its position 'before it's too late'

Israeli government pushing an already volatile situation to edge of explosion — Palestinians

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa called Saturday for Israel to reconsider its position "before it's too late" and the peace process collapses.

Mr. Musa called for inter-Arab consultations "to discuss what to do in case of a collapse" in the process.

"Israel should reconsider its position before it's too late," the minister said, adding that "the situation is very dangerous."

"It's time to reflect and to take a position in favour of peace," he said.

"I think that the best formula is the one adopted by the [June 1996] Arab summit in Cairo and it must be re-read."

The summit had linked continued normalisation with Israel to the Jewish state's respect for the principle of trading land for peace on which the 1991 Madrid conference, which launched the peace process, was based.

According to the summit's resolutions, any renunciation by Israel "of its commitments and obligations... would force the Arab countries to reconsider steps taken toward Israel in the peace process framework."

Mr. Musa said "the Washington meetings are the last chance before disappointment overwhelms the peace process and its results."

U.S. President Bill Clinton is scheduled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Jan. 20 and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Jan. 22 in Washington.



Israeli soldiers arrest a Palestinian who was throwing stones in the West Bank city of Hebron Saturday (Reuters photo)

Mr. Musa said the Israeli government has "an ideological position which consists of rejecting the return of [Arab] land, the principles agreed on at the Madrid conference and U.N. resolutions" calling for withdrawal from occupied land.

"We reject this position," he added.

Mr. Musa also said that President Arafat will visit Cairo Jan. 19 before going to Washington.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) warned that the Israeli government, with its tough stance and continuous

of settlement expansion "is pushing an already volatile situation to the edge of explosion."

"The peace process is in danger because of the continuing deadlock in negotiations, and it is clear to all that the Israeli government is behind the deadlock," his cabinet said in a statement after its weekly session Friday.

U.S. peace process coordinator Dennis Ross ended Saturday his five-day shuttle between Israel and the PNA without any concrete breakthrough in the negotiations deadlock.

Mr. Ross had hoped to win progress on a U.S. package deal by which Israel would conduct a "significant" pull-back of troops in the West Bank in return activists.

The two sides would then enter accelerated negotiations for a final peace accord.

But Mr. Netanyahu announced Thursday that he would present President Clinton with a vague plan for a one-time withdrawal which will take place only after a five-month "test period" during which the Palestinians must meet Israeli demands for a crackdown on militants.

Israeli soldiers, Palestinian youths clash in Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Several dozen Palestinian youths threw stones at Israeli soldiers who responded with rubber-coated bullets, injuring four, in the West Bank town of Hebron on Saturday, witnesses said.

The clashes began when an argument broke out between members of the Palestinian police and members of the Palestinian Preventative Security forces near the line dividing the city into Israeli and Palestinian controlled parts.

The personal dispute turned to pushing and shoving between members

of the two security forces, and a crowd of over 1,000 passers-by gathered around the fracas, witnesses said.

When police moved to disperse the crowd, several dozen youths split off and threw stones at Israeli soldiers posted at the edge of the area under army control. The soldiers returned fire with rubber-coated metal bullets.

Four youths were lightly injured, witnesses said. The rock-throwing continued sporadically.

The clash came a day after the Palestinian National Authority warned that the peace process was

being brought "to the brink of explosion" by Israel's hard-line stance on the peace process and its plans to expand West Bank Jewish settlements.

U.S. envoy Dennis Ross left the region Saturday after winning no concrete progress on an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank which is central to U.S. efforts to end the 10-month deadlock in negotiations.

There are around a dozen separate Palestinian security forces, all under separate commands and with ill-defined domains of action.

Israeli army arrests five Palestinians

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Israeli army arrested five Palestinians suspected of links to Islamist groups overnight outside the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian security sources said Saturday. From the village of Kobar, two brothers, Muhammad and Ashraf Barghuti, 35 and 25, along with a third man, Zaki Amin, 33, were picked up from their homes, the sources said. The imam of the village mosque in nearby Amud, Mahmoud Abdul Majid, 49, was arrested, as was a teenager Sari Orabi Khalil, 17, from the village of Rafat, on suspicion of belonging to Hamas, the sources said.

Arab countries ask Greece to scrap joint manoeuvres with Israel

ATHENS (AFP) — Ambassadors of 12 Arab countries Friday called on the Greek government to scrap plans for joint naval manoeuvres with Israel, diplomats said. The ambassadors met the Greek parliamentary foreign affairs commission and defence commission at a closed session to put their request, the diplomats said. The joint manoeuvres had been planned for late June but were postponed. The government is still considering holding the exercises. Greece Wednesday criticised naval exercises in the Mediterranean Sea between Turkey and Israel and the United States saying they would not contribute to "peace and stability" in the region.

King hails U.S. role in Mideast peacemaking

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday paid tribute to the U.S. for its positive role to help bring peace to the Middle East and its endeavours to bring the views of the different parties closer together and in urging them to implement the peace accords they had agreed on.

The King underlined the importance of achieving comprehensive development and supporting economic projects in the region as these contribute to enhancing peace opportunities and promote stability.

The congressmen paid tribute to the King's endeavours and his continued efforts to overcome the obstacles that obstruct the peace process. They also expressed satisfaction with the strong relations between the U.S. and Jordan.

Present at the meeting were HRH Prince Faisal, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh and the King's Advisor Salah Abu Zeid.

To improve their living conditions, government to tap skills of retired servicemen — Prince Hassan

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Saturday said that the government, acting upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein, will lend all possible support to the Jordan Economic and Social Organisation of Retired Servicemen (JESORS) in a bid to improve the living conditions of retired servicemen.

The government is also keen to ensure that the retirees contribute to the country's development projects, he said.

Addressing a meeting of JESORS executive committee held at the Prime Ministry, Prince Hassan described retired servicemen as people having very high skills and excellent capabilities that can be employed in the country's development projects and the various sectors of civil life.

Prince Hassan underlined the importance of strengthening ties between the government's departments and JESORS in the field of development projects and in conducting feasibility studies for these projects especially in water harvesting, construction of earth dams, and in housing.

Prince Hassan noted that the ministries of water and irrigation and planning have already conducted feasibility studies on water and said that JESORS can benefit from these studies as well as others which will be discussed after the Parliament's debate on the 1998 fiscal budget has been completed.

Prince Hassan emphasised that the financial portfolio will not be a savings fund isolated from the country's development endeavours. He urged the organisation to identify projects for the coming years, noting that the country will soon embark on the implementation of a new development plan.

He emphasised the importance of technically linking the government-prepared plan with JESORS, especially in the water and housing sectors.

Prince Hassan proposed the creation of a "house of expertise" to help JESORS manage its projects.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, who is the president of JESORS higher council, expressed appreciation of the Crown Prince's continued care and support for JESORS. He pledged the continuous support to JESORS with all available means to enable it to carry out its task.

Attending the meeting were Prince Talal Ben Mubammad, director of the National Security Council, two deputies of the prime minister, Jawad Anani and Abdullah Ensour, and the executive president of JESORS, Salem Turk.

Jordanian, Iraqi ministers of interior to meet next month on prisoners' file

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid said on Saturday he planned to meet with his Iraqi counterpart in Amman next month in an attempt to close the controversial file of national-als held in each other's jails.

Mr. Rashid and Iraqi Interior Minister Mohammad Abdul Razaq agreed during talks on Thursday to meet again after the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Mr. Rashid said a brief stopover in Amman after returning from an Arab League meeting in Tunis.

"We agreed to discuss the issue of all Jordanian prisoners in Iraqi jails and Iraqi prisoners in Jordanian jails and close the file forever," Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times.

Jordan and Iraq, apparently keen to contain tension in bilateral ties after Baghdad executed four Jordanian smugglers on Dec. 8, earlier this month

exchanged lists of prisoners held in Iraq and Jordan.

Mr. Rashid said investigations were continuing to unveil the identity of assailants involved in an attack on Iraqi commercial attaché, Rahim Taher, in Amman last week.

Mr. Rahim escaped unhurt when he was fired at from a passing car as he was driving to his office from his house in Um Otheina.

"The concerned security agencies are doing their job in a proper manner and results will be announced as soon as the investigations are over," Mr. Rashid said.

Pope calls for new commitment to peace process, pledges compassion for Iraqis

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Pope John Paul II called Saturday for Israelis and Palestinians not to stray from the path of the peace process, saying it is the only route to peace.

The Pope also pleaded in his New Year's message for the U.N. Security Council and Iraqi leaders to treat the Iraqi people with compassion and appealed for mercy for Kurdish refugees.

"Peace seems to have moved further away from the Middle East," he told diplomats here, adding, "the peace process begun in Madrid in 1991 is practically at a standstill."

"The principles of the Madrid conference and the

guidelines of the 1993 Oslo meeting paved the way to peace. They still remain the only effective means of moving forward," he added.

The pontiff said that with the jubilee year 2000 approaching, he was especially praying for Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth to become places "of justice and peace where Jews, Christians and Muslims will finally be able to walk together before God."

The Pope also deplored the suffering in Iraq, which has been under what he called "a pitiless embargo" since it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

"An entire people is the victim of a constraint which puts it in hazardous conditions of

survival," the Pope said.

The U.N. embargo is to be lifted when U.N. weapons inspectors certify that Baghdad has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction.

"I must call upon the consciences of those who, in Iraq and elsewhere, put political, economic or strategic considerations before the fundamental good of the people, and I ask them to show compassion," he said.

"The weak and the innocent cannot pay for mistakes for which they are not responsible."

He then turned to the Kurds, who have fled Turkey in increasing numbers in the past few weeks.

"We cannot pass over in

silence the tragedy of the Kurdish peoples, which in these very days has drawn everyone's attention," the Pope said.

"The immediate demands of compassion towards refugees in extreme situations must not make us forget the quest of millions of their brothers and sisters who are also calling for secure and acceptable conditions of life," he added.

More than 1,200 refugees, mainly Kurds, have arrived in Italy in the past two weeks, after months of already increased Kurdish immigration, and Italy and its European partners demanded that Turkey stop the flow.

57 villagers massacred in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Up to 57 civilians have been killed by suspected Islamists in Algeria since Thursday, newspapers here reported Saturday, adding to the country's unconfirmed press death toll of at least 600 for the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The reported scale of the massacres makes this Ramadan — which began Dec. 30 — the bloodiest since the insurgency broke out six years ago.

In the worst of the four latest attacks, in the Sour Al Ghoulane area south of the capital, 26 people from three families had their throats cut in the isolated hamlet of Banni Yeddou on Thursday.

Three people were injured and four young girls abducted by the attackers, who fled when security forces arrived, according to the Al Watan newspaper.

The pro-government paper L'Authentique said

four attackers were killed by the army, which has barracks in the area.

It quoted the military as saying it was impossible to provide protection for the hamlet, because its houses were scattered over a wide area.

"We told them to arm themselves but they refused. Many of their neighbours, whom we armed, owe their lives to that. We were only alerted as the carnage was taking place by the cries of the women running towards us," the paper quoted security forces as saying.

In the western region of Saïda the same day, five women and four men were killed in an attack on a farm by a dozen armed assailants, who arrived in a lorry just as they were breaking their fast.

According to Al Watan, a 76-year-old woman was decapitated and her daughter-in-law had her throat

slit.

La Tribune reported that two people were killed in a fake roadblock on a dangerous forest road between the western towns of Sidi Bel Abbas and Mascara. Twelve people were wounded.

And in a last-minute addition to its pages, the Liberte newspaper said it had received reports of an attack in Tablat, south of Algiers, in which around 20 people may have been killed.

Three other assaults by armed groups were said to have been fought off: one in the western region of Tlemcen by soldiers alerted by inhabitants, and two others, in Saïda, by villagers formed into civil defence units.

La Tribune said a "terrorist" had been killed after a gunfight erupted between civil militia and some armed Islamists who had arrived in Banni Yedi, east of Algiers, for cakes in a cafe.

The massacres come as Algeria's military-backed government agreed on Thursday to a visit by a European Union (EU) mission.

The EU mission will be the first major international scrutiny of the Algerian conflict since the civil war began in 1992, when the military seized power as Islamist parties were poised for victory in general elections.

The Algerian government has made it clear, however, that it will not accept any interference in its handling of the conflict, other than aid to help it fight what it calls "terrorism".

According to Western estimates, at least 60,000 people have died in the ensuing bloodshed. Amnesty International puts the figure at 80,000.

The worst-ever reported massacre was last Sunday night when hundreds — survivors told newspapers — may be up to 500 — died in attacks in isolated villages in the Ouarsenis mountains 250 kilometres west of Algiers.

"We went up yesterday to bury our dead," one of the survivors told La Tribune. "We put 20 bodies at a time in the farthest villages are still lying on the ground. Some bodies have been eaten by jackals."

The press also reported that one notorious extremist leader, Belkacem Touah, known as "Nadir," was killed in the eastern mountains of Zharbar by security forces.



This AFP file photo taken November 20, 1994 shows a mother overcome by emotion in the village of Mahelma, some 20 kilometres west of Algiers, after she was shown a portrait of her son who was killed by suspected armed fundamentalists four-day earlier.

Arab League information chief to visit Algeria

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League information chief Mohab Moqbel said here Saturday that he would visit Algeria to express the Arab League's solidarity against the bloody campaign of terror there.

Mr. Moqbel told reporters he would carry a message to Algerian President Liamine Zeroual from Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid "underscoring our solidarity with the Algerian people and govern-

ment against the massacres."

Mr. Moqbel, who said he would be leaving on Monday for Algiers, reiterated that the Arab League was firmly opposed to foreign interference in Algerian internal affairs after Western leaders proposed international action to help end the bloodshed.

"We reject any interference in Algeria's internal affairs whatever its goals are," Mr. Moqbel said. Mr. Moqbel refused to

say if he was carrying any proposals from the 22-member pan-Arab organisation to help put an end to the bloodshed in Algeria but said he would spend several days there for talks with officials.

On Friday the Arab League assistant secretary general for Arab affairs, Ahmad Ben Helli, stressed that the Algerian people were capable of solving their own problems with-

out foreign interference. "The Algerian people

can resolve their problems on their own and destroy the scourge of terrorism. If Western countries want to help Algeria, they should close their doors to the terrorist leaders whom they welcome," Mr. Ben Helli said.

Mr. Ben Helli said the Arab League envoy would discuss with President Zeroual "what role the League could play in helping Algeria deal with the scourge of terrorism."

Chinese FM arrives in Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen arrived in Algiers on Saturday for a three-day visit, amid the bloodiest Ramadan in six years of violence in Algeria.

Mr. Qian, who is also a vice premier, travelled from Morocco, where he began a visit on Thursday. He was greeted at Algiers airport by his host, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmad Attaf.

Mr. Qian is the most senior foreign official to visit Algeria since the Dec. 30 start of a series of massacres — coinciding with the annual Ramadan month-long religious holiday and blamed on Islamists — which have reportedly left more than 600 dead.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Qian saluted "the traditional friendship" between Algeria and China, and hoped his visit would give "a new lift to bilateral relations," the APS news agency reported.

Mr. Attaf spoke of "deepening" relations, particularly in the health, construction and scientific sectors.

During his stay Mr. Qian will be seeing President Liamine Zeroual, who made a five-day trip to China in October 1996, and Prime Minister Ahmad Ouyahia.

China helped Algeria build its 15-megawatt Essalam (peace) nuclear power plant at Ain Oussera, south of Algiers, in 1991.

Lebanon files complaint with ceasefire panel

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon on Friday filed a complaint against Israel with the five-nation committee monitoring a ceasefire in south Lebanon after a Lebanese civilian was wounded by shellfire, officials said.

Jalileh Munib, 60, was hit in the leg on Thursday by a fragment from an Israeli shell which landed on the village of Qalich, north of the western sector of the Israeli-occupied border zone in south Lebanon, police said.

It is the third complaint against Israel made by Lebanon to the international committee in the past two weeks.

Lebanese officials said Israel had also made a complaint to the international committee after a civilian car and a house in the village of Bayada inside the buffer zone were hit by mortar fire

on Thursday.

The ceasefire committee — comprising representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States — was set up under the terms of the truce ending Israel's 17-day Grapes of Wrath offensive against Hizbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon in April 1996.

Under the terms of the accord, both Israel and Hizbollah are banned from targeting civilians or using civilian areas to launch attacks in their ongoing conflict in south Lebanon.

The committee is due to meet on Monday at the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the border town of Naqoura.

Hizbollah spearheads Lebanese resistance to Israel's occupation of a buffer zone in south Lebanon along its northern border.

Hamas spokesman backs armed attacks against Israel

DAMASCUS (AFP) — An official from the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas stressed the group's support for armed attacks against Israel at a memorial rally here Friday for the slain Hamas bombmaker Yahya Ayyash.

"Hamas reiterates that

resistance is its choice, that it is the only way it can live, and that its glory is built by its present and future martyrs," the group's Jordanian spokesman, Muhammad Nazal, said.

"We reiterate our rejection of these accords which have squandered our rights, territo-

ry and future," he said in reference to the peace accords Palestinian President Yasser Arafat signed with Israel.

Mr. Arafat has "led our people from one defeat to another" and "transformed [Palestinian] self-rule into a guardian of the Israeli occupation," he said.

Members of the Lebanese group Hizbollah and other Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process also attended the rally in the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp here.

Ayyash, considered by Israel as Hamas's chief bombmaker for his role in

bus bombings which killed 45 people, was slain two years ago on Monday by a booby-trapped portable phone presumably slipped to him by Israeli agents.

His murder led to a spate of bus bombings by Hamas which, along with a wave of Islamic Jihad bombings,

killed 58 people in early 1996.

Ayyash's wife, father and children attended a similar rally in the West Bank town of Hebron Monday at which 10 masked activists blew up a model Israeli bus, the favourite target of Ayyash's bombings.

Main Turkish-Cypriot opposition party keen to join EU membership talks

NICOSIA (AFP) — The main Turkish-Cypriot opposition party is keen to join talks later this year on the divided island's membership of the European Union (EU), its leader said Saturday.

"The Republican Turkish Party (CTP) will take part in the talks on Cyprus's membership of the EU in its capacity as a political party, if the EU invites Turkish and Greek-Cypriot political parties to participate," its leader Mehmet Ali Talat told AFP.

But the left-wing CTP would not take part in the talks as the only Turkish-Cypriot representative, Mr. Talat

stressed. "The Turkish community in Cyprus must take part in the talks on Cyprus's membership of the EU with delegates who represent the community in its entirety," he said.

"It would be a mistake [for the EU] to negotiate with one Turkish-Cypriot political party in the name of the whole of the island's Turkish community. It is not democratic," he said. The CTP has 13 of the 50 seats in the Turkish-Cypriot assembly which acts as a parliament for the breakaway Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) declared by Turkish-Cypriot leaders in 1983 but

recognised only by Ankara.

The Turkish-Cypriot community had to be represented in the membership talks "by a method reflecting political equality," Mr. Talat stressed.

The smaller Communal Liberation Party (TKP), a left-wing party with five seats in the assembly, rejected participation in the membership talks without participation by Ankara.

"It would be a mistake if the EU negotiated Cyprus's membership with the political parties because their representation is not enough without the Turkish side," TKP leader Mustafa Akinci told AFP.

Egypt examining plans to trade prisoners with Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian Foreign Ministry is examining plans to extradite Iraqi prisoners held in Egypt in exchange for detainees held in Iraq, a senior official said on Saturday.

"The foreign ministry is in contact with the interior and justice ministries to draw up lists of Iraqi prisoners held in Egypt to discuss the possibility of exchanging them for Egyptian prisoners held in Iraq," Minister Abdul Aziz told reporters.

Under the deal, which has yet to be worked out, prisoners would be able to finish their jail terms in their respective countries, said Mr. Abdul Aziz, an assistant to Foreign Minister Amr Musa for Egyptian affairs abroad.

Mr. Abdul Aziz did not specify which prisoners would be exchanged but he stressed that prisoners convicted for murder or drug charges would be exempted from the deal if and when it goes ahead.

"The starting point will be drawing up lists of all the prisoners held in both countries to reach agreement on those who will be effectively traded," he said.

According to Mr. Abdul Aziz the trade-off could go ahead according to certain agreements which exist between Arab countries or in line with special bilateral arrangements which could be reached between Iraq and Egypt.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Holy Koran
14:10 Cartoon
14:30 French Programmes
16:15 Prayers — Believe and Behave
17:00 Energy Express
17:30 Tarzan
18:30 News Headlines
18:35 America's Funniest Video
19:00 News in French
19:15 Ramadan Talks
20:01 Dadd's Army
20:30 Killing for a Living
21:00 Renegade
22:00 News at Ten
22:30 North and South
23:15 The Jewel in the Crown
24:00 Islam in a changing world

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:43 Dhuhr
14:31 'Asr
16:54 Maghreb
18:16 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swetfieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 632366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 865897

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 688404.

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.

654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.

675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.

614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Cold, rainy, and cloudy conditions will prevail during the day. A cold polar air mass accompanied by a depression will affect the Kingdom

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

in the evening causing a tangible

drop in temperatures, and snow

falling over various areas through-

out Monday. Winds will be north-

westerly active. In Aqaba, it will be

rainy, skies cloudy to partly cloudy,

winds northerly active, and seas

choppy.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 04/06

Aqaba 10/15

Deserts 03/08

Jordan Valley 10/14

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 12, Aqaba 19 Humidity

readings: Amman 40 per cent,

Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahra 820425
Dr. Wissam Hazyin 748563
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyin 620115
Dr. Munther Al Qaraini 779599
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IBRID:
Dr. Ghazi T'amaah 350080

Al Quds pharmacy 1

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Safarini 987565

Khalifeh pharmacy 98541

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints

787111

Telephone Information (directory

assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

Abdull Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53201

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-532101

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 8184352

Khalidi Maternity 642816

Akileh Maternity 6424412

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667279

The Islamic, Abdali 6612637

Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3

Al-Bashir 7751126

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 6023450

Arud Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and

Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital

09983323

Zarqa National Hospital

09900561

Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732

Al-Hitma Modern Hospital

09990990

IBRID:
Princess Basma Hospital

02127555

Princess Basma Hospital

02127555

Greek Catholic Hospital

02127275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

102347100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital

03314111

Other Flights



in the village of Mahlabeh killed by suspected armed forces

visit Algeria

can resolve the issue on their own and the security of the region. It is a matter of time before the two countries will reach a peaceful settlement. The Jordanian delegation to the meeting in Luxor will have a single topic on its agenda: terrorism as an obstacle to development and democracy, according to Sa'd Hayel Srour, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, on Saturday.

inst Israel

led to a number of deaths and injuries. The Israeli army has been accused of using excessive force. The Jordanian delegation to the meeting in Luxor will have a single topic on its agenda: terrorism as an obstacle to development and democracy, according to Sa'd Hayel Srour, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, on Saturday.

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the Jordanian delegation to the meeting in Luxor will have a single topic on its agenda: terrorism as an obstacle to development and democracy, according to Sa'd Hayel Srour, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, on Saturday.

Home News



KING, QUEEN HOST IFTAR BANQUETS: His Majesty King Hussein Saturday hosts an iftar banquet at Al Hussein Sports City for notables representing the governorates of Mafrq, Jerash, Zarqa, and Ajloun. Attending the banquet were HRH Crown Prince Hassan, other members of the Royal family, the prime minister, court officials, and King Hussein's advisor on tribal affairs, Hamid Fayez. Her Majesty Queen Noor Saturday hosts an iftar banquet at the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel for the employees of Noor Al Hussein Foundation and members of the higher committee for the Jerash Festival. Among the guests were wives of U.S. congressmen currently visiting Jordan (Petra photos)

Lower House Speaker Srour to attend Arab parliamentary meeting in Luxor

AMMAN (J.T.) — A meeting by the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) due in the Egyptian city of Luxor on Wednesday will have a single topic on its agenda: terrorism as an obstacle to development and democracy, according to Sa'd Hayel Srour, speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, on Saturday.

Mr. Srour, who is leading Jordan's delegation to the meeting, said the gathering of Arab ministers in the town, the site of a recent terrorist attack against tourists, will focus attention on ways to stem acts of terrorism and the different stands of Arab parliaments vis-à-vis the issue.

The meeting, which will take place in Luxor as a show of pan-Arab solidarity with Egypt and the Egyptian people in their fight against terrorism, will also examine contributions by Arab parliaments towards curtailing terrorist attacks and fighting their perpetrators, he said.

Voicing Jordan's absolute solidarity with Egypt in confronting and combating terrorism, Mr. Srour said Egypt's economic stability and security are targeted by the terrorist groups.

Mr. Srour added that the Jordanian delegation will express its total rejection of all forms of terrorism, regardless of their motives, and full support for Egypt's measures against the perpetrators of terrorist acts.

The Nov. 17 attack, which at the time was blamed on Islamist groups, resulted in the death of 69 tourists and prompted the Egyptian authorities to take extra precautionary security measures to protect visitors to the ancient site.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak admitted at the time that the security services in Luxor, located in southern Egypt, had failed to protect the visitors. He subsequently sacked his interior minister, Hassan Al Alfi, and appointed Habib Al Adeli in his place.

Mr. Srour said, "We will work with our Arab brothers to unify our position in the face of terrorism."

Mr. Srour, who will be accompanied by a three-member delegation from the Senate and the Lower House, will meet with heads of parliamentary delegations to discuss bilateral cooperation in parliamentary affairs.

Cabinet hears report by Rashid on Arab interior ministers meeting in Cairo

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Saturday heard a report by Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid on the outcome of a meeting of the Arab ministers of interior in Cairo last week.

"At the meeting, the Arab ministers approved a number of agreements designed to promote intra-Arab cooperation in security-related affairs."

The Cabinet, which met in a regular session chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, discussed and endorsed a two-year Japanese aid programme to help the Kingdom develop the Jordan Rift Valley. Japan will be providing Jordan with \$310,000 in 1998 and \$251,000 in 1999 to help finance the country's development projects there.

The Council of Ministers approved an application by the Arab Contractors Federation to open a bureau in Amman and endorsed air transport agreements with South Africa, Mauritania, and Yemen.

A Cabinet statement said that upon the recommendations of Minister of Finance Sulaiman Hafez, the council has decided to impose a toll charge of 100 fils per tonne of exported goods from the free trade zones by the Jordanian-Japanese and the Jordanian-Indian fertilizer companies. The two companies have already consented to the measure.

The Cabinet formed Jordan's delegation to a pan-Arab meeting on customs to be held in Morocco on Jan. 13 and formed another delegation to take part in a meeting to be held in Cairo on Jan. 15 to discuss the implementation of an executive programme on pan-Arab free trade.

The council also formed a delegation to attend a pan-Arab Islamic committee meeting in Jeddah to discuss economic, cultural, and social affairs. The meeting will be held in preparation for a meeting by the foreign ministers of Islamic countries to be held in Doha, Qatar, in March.

Illiteracy rate expected to drop to eight per cent by 2000 — education minister

AMMAN (Petra) — The illiteracy rate in Jordan among citizens over 15 years of age is expected to drop from 11 per cent to ten per cent next year and to eight per cent by the year 2000, according to Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri.

Speaking at a ceremony at the Amman Teachers Club to honour educators and adult learners at literacy centres, the minister said 350,000 Jordanians have so far benefited from the nationwide adult literacy centres run by the Ministry of Education.

Jordan introduced literacy and adult education centres in 1966, which helped reduce the illiteracy rate from 67.7 per cent at the time to 11 per cent in 1997, according to the minister.

At the ceremony, held in observance of Arab Literacy Day, Dr. Masri said Jordan introduced laws in 1952 making education compulsory and providing it free of charge. Now only five per cent of the 15 to 45 age group are still illiterate, but the ministry will continue promoting the literacy and adult education centres as part of a campaign to eradicate illiteracy, he added.

The minister distributed awards to educators and students at the ceremony and opened a Jordanian folklore exhibition of adult learners' work, including national and traditional costumes, embroidery, paintings, and a variety of handicrafts.

Ministry of Education sources said in 1995 there were an estimated 70 million illiterates in the Arab World aged between 15 and 45, while the entire world's estimated number of illiterates stood at 885 million.

Majali, former U.S. State Secretary Schultz discuss peace process status

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Saturday described the Jordan-Israel peace treaty signed in October 1994 as part of an overall comprehensive regional peace plan supported by the world community in general and the U.S. in particular.

Speaking at a meeting with former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, Dr. Majali said Jordan has been exerting intensive efforts at the regional and international levels to end the stalemate in the peace process. He expressed hope that the current efforts to break the deadlock would succeed and remove the obstacles in the path of peace.

Dr. Majali said Jordan has great hopes for attaining a strong national economy in view of the success of the economic restructuring programme agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund. The country's economic reforms and development of the water, electricity, telecommunications, and transport sectors are bound to further strengthen the economy, he added.

The prime minister noted that Jordan also counts on its skilled manpower, for which there is high demand in the Arab Gulf states.

For his part, Mr. Schultz commended Jordan's role vis-à-vis the peace process and stated that Jordan has a pivotal role to play, especially now that the Kingdom has signed a peace treaty with Israel.

The former secretary of state expressed hope that the intensive efforts now under way will help the concerned parties find a way out of the deadlock in the peace process.

Prosecution asks court to convict man accused of triple murder on all charges

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A criminal prosecutor in the case of a 35-year-old man accused of murdering a Syrian family in June asked the court on Saturday to convict the defendant on all charges.

Fateh Jasi, who earlier confessed to murdering Janial Abdo, 38, his wife Manal Othman, 35, and their two-year-old son Khalid to settle a financial problem with Mr. Abdo's father, later retracted his testimony. The three were found dead on June 16.

"The defendant plotted to kill the couple and abduct their child, knowing that they had nothing to do with the financial dispute with Jamal's father," Criminal Prosecutor Saleh Lawzi told the court.

In a four-page closing argument containing five charges pressed against Mr. Jasi — pre-meditated murder, 13 counts, theft, molestation, arson, and abduction — Mr. Lawzi said the defendant "should be punished for all these charges to teach others a lesson."

If convicted, Mr. Jasi could face the death sentence.

Mr. Jasi told the court last month that he suffered from depression and mental disorders and denied being the killer of the family. But a psychiatrist last month refuted his claims in court.

He alleged he only wanted to abduct the family for ransom.

He claimed that three others, all residing in Syria, were the actual killers. Mr. Jasi, indebted to the three, said they forced him to kidnap the family for ransom.

In his argument, Mr. Lawzi refuted his allegations, stating "it is evident that Mr. Jasi is the sole killer based on a court testimony by a relative who refused to shelter the child in her house."

Moreover, Mr. Lawzi stated that the defendant confessed willingly to the triple murder on June 19 and "even demanded he be hung quickly to end his life."

According to the charge sheet, the suspect, who arrived in Jordan in March to kill the family, went to their house three months later, drugged them, and killed Mr. Abdo and Ms. Othman.

He then fled with the child to take refuge at a relative's house, but the woman refused to let them stay. He strangled the child, put him in the car's trunk, and drove to a farm in Madaba, where he hurried him, according to the charge sheet.

The court tribunal, headed by Judge Mohammad Ajameh and including Judges Mifteh Mubeidin and Issa Hamdan, postponed the case to Jan. 14 to hear the defence's closing arguments.

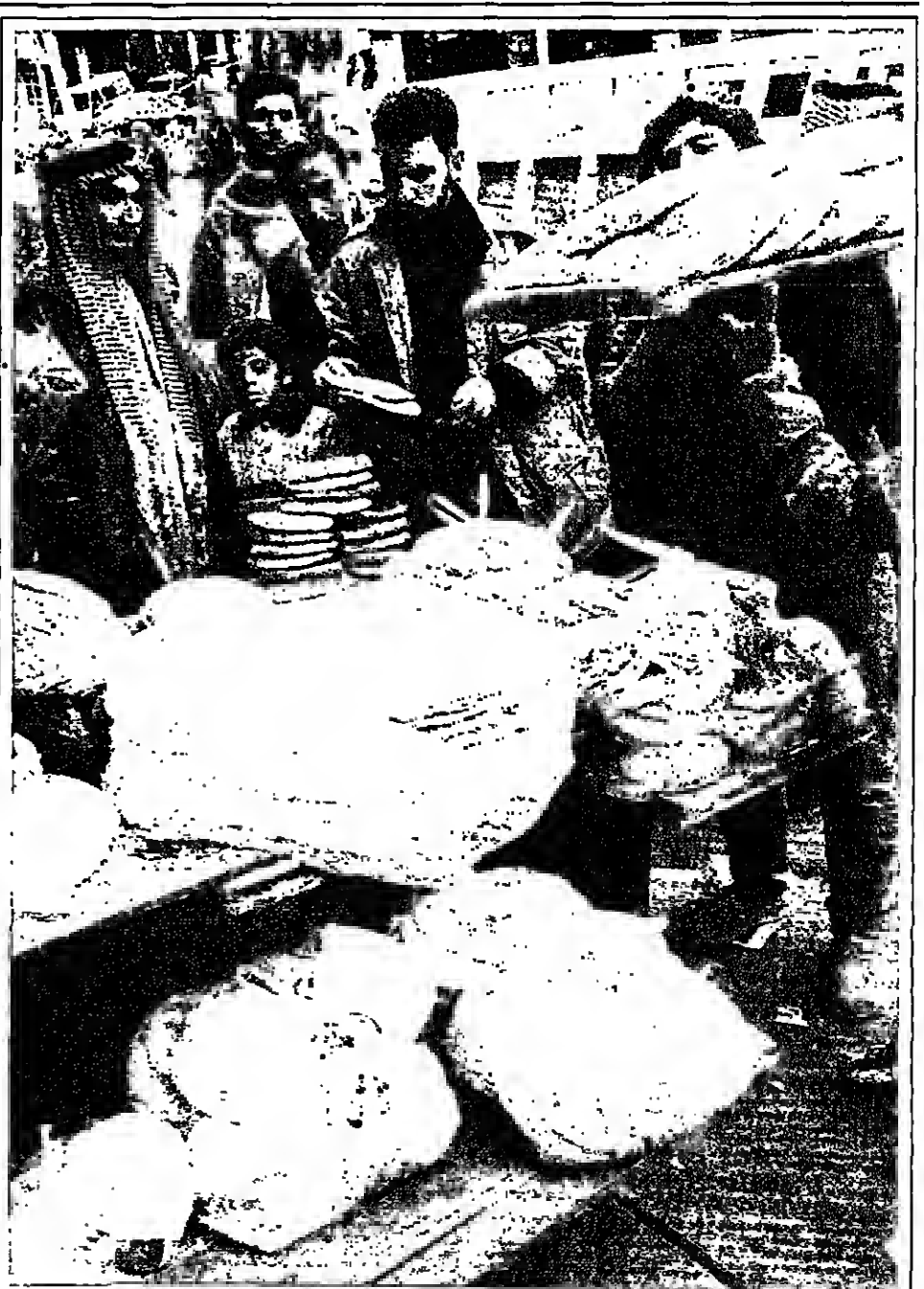
Snow, drop in temperatures forecast over next two days

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan over the next two days will be swept by rainy and snowy weather, with temperatures ranging from 4° C at night to only 6° C during the day, according to the Department of Meteorology Saturday.

A department spokesperson said the rain and the snow, accompanied by fairly strong winds, will affect the Kingdom as a result of a low pressure cell over Cyprus moving eastwards, with a series of cold fronts affecting the entire eastern Mediterranean.

The cold fronts, originating from the polar region and moving to Jordan from eastern Europe and Turkey, will cause the sharp decrease in temperatures and drench Jordan with rain for at least two days, the spokesperson added.

Snow is expected Sunday evening and Monday, particularly at elevations 1,000 metres above sea level, but rain will affect most regions, the spokesperson said.



RAMADAN CHARITY: Jordanians collect bread Saturday to distribute it during the Holy Month of Ramadan to poor families who cannot afford to buy bread. Thirty per cent of Jordanians live in conditions of poverty (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Other flights

03:30	04:30	05:30	06:30	07:30	08:30	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	19:30	20:30	21:30
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Royal Wings RW

06:45	07:45	08:45	09:45	10:45	11:45	12:45	13:45	14:45	15:45	16:45	17:45	18:45	19:45	20:45	21:45
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WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

- * Musical performance by Al Hannounah Musical Band at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (to run for three consecutive evenings).

SECOND PLASTIC ART WEEK

- * Abstract (plastic) art by several artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 17.
- * Seminar on the role of the private and public sectors in supporting and enhancing plastic art (with the participation of Mohammad Al Amiri and Ghassan Mafadieh) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Exhibition of writing arabesque, miniature on silk by Hatouf Hijazi Tabba'a, at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre, Jabal Amman, 2nd Circle, (Tel. 647858) until Jan. 15.
- * Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).
- * Works by contemporary Arab artists at Durai Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh.

* Film on renowned Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

Qatayef baker continues making sweets to meet 'endless' Ramadan demand

By Jihad Hdeib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Qatayef, one of the most popular Arab sweets, gains added prominence in Jordan and elsewhere during the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan. Rarely can one find a Jordanian or Arab household whose members did not eat qatayef during Ramadan.

But for Abu Ali, the owner of one of the oldest and most popular qatayef bakeries in downtown Amman, Ramadan lasts 12 months a year, because he bakes the pancake-shaped pastry year round to meet the heavy customer demand.

"I have been baking qatayef for the past 38 years and I know that the demand for them is endless, especially during Ramadan," said Ahmad Atallah (Abu Ali), who emigrated to Jordan from the Palestinian town of Deir Yassin following the 1948 war.

"When I started baking qatayef in the late 1950s, there were no others in Amman dedicated to this trade around the year," said Abu Ali, who owns a small place in downtown Amman.

Qatayef pancakes are usually stuffed with nuts and dipped in syrup before they are served.

"I am 64 years old now but I feel that I can continue to bake for the public assisted by my children," according to Abu Ali.

"I am friendly to all customers and I have made the acquaintance of many people through this trade. I feel quite satisfied with my job, which earns my family's income," noted Abu Ali.

When asked how he learned the trade, Abu Ali said he had fled Deir Yassin with his family after Israel's occupation of the town in 1948 and settled temporarily in Beirut, where he began baking qatayef.

"I have 13 children, some of whom work with me in the shop, especially during the month of Ramadan when the demand for qatayef is greater," he pointed out.

According to Abu Ali, his qatayef in frozen form has found its way to many countries, including the U.S.

In the 1960s, the price of a kilogramme of qatayef was a mere six piasters but now it is 60, said Abu Ali, who complained that inflation has made life for him more expensive and more complicated than ever.

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Council of Europe to call for ban on human cloning

STRASBOURG, France (AFP) — The Council of Europe opens for signing Monday the first — and only — international accord strictly banning human cloning, amid an outcry over a U.S. researcher's scheme to replicate people.

Seventeen European countries have already announced they will sign the legally binding protocol that rules out any exceptions to a strict ban on creating a human being genetically identical to another, living or dead, whatever the technique.

The prohibition on cloning, under the terms of the protocol, cannot be circumvented for any reason, even for public safety, protecting public health or protecting rights and freedoms for all.

The signing ceremony will take place at the French Foreign Ministry in Paris in the presence of French Justice Minister Elisabeth Guigou, French European Affairs Minister Pierre Moscovici, and the secretary-general of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarschys of Sweden.

It will be preceded by a European conference on national ethical committees that will be inaugurated Monday morning by French President Jacques Chirac.

Countries that have said they will sign the human cloning protocol, which will take effect once five countries have ratified the text, include Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

Several other countries in eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, Romania and Slovakia, are also expected to sign.

Only countries who have

already signed the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine can sign the protocol on cloning. This is the reason why Germany — though it supports the cloning protocol — will not be able to sign Monday.

The German federal health ministry however has hailed the European initiative. In 1990 Germany was one of the first countries to ban any form of cloning.

This week German Research Minister Jürgen Rüttgens called U.S. physicist Richard Seed, whose announcement has created the latest storm over cloning, "an ethically deranged soul."

"Human beings cannot, and must not, be planned or manufactured according to design," he said, adding that "cloning humans or human

embryos is a head-on attack against our rules of freedom and democracy."

The German minister hailed an announcement earlier this week by U.S. White House spokesman Michael McCurry that President Bill Clinton wanted Congress to vote as quickly as possible on legislation proposed last year that bans all human cloning in the United States.

Mr. Clinton last year barred the use of federal funds for any research on cloning human after the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult animal.

"Dolly's creators, too, joined a growing international outcry over Mr. Seed's assertions."

Mr. Seed, a Chicago fertility researcher who is a graduate of Harvard and a for-

mer instructor at Northeastern University in Boston, said in broadcast interviews this week he plans to move quickly — perhaps within 90 days — to carry out the first human cloning.

He said he plans to commercialise the procedure, eventually setting up 10 or 20 clinics in the United States and five or six overseas.

Mr. Seed also defiantly asserted in the interviews that Mr. Clinton does not have the legal power to stop him.

In Britain, Dolly's Scottish creators Harry Griffin, assistant director of the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, and colleague Ian Wilmut condemned Mr. Seed's plans as "grossly unethical."

The European protocol, binding its signatories to compliance, calls for heavy penal sanctions for any infraction committed in the European countries.

Along with the sanctions, any offender would be banned from further scientific research or continuing to practise, and any laboratory or clinic involved would have its licence revoked.

Legal proceedings could also be started against any laboratory or European citizen opening a clinic involved in human cloning outside Europe.

The document to be signed Monday follows through provisions already outlined in the Convention on Biomedicine signed by 22 member states of the Council of Europe.

This text bans any meddling with human genomes — the genetic material of an organism — except for preventive, diagnostic or therapeutic reasons.

Mexico says U.S. clone scientist not welcome

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Mexico Friday sharply rejected a U.S. scientist's suggestion that he may bring his human cloning experiments to Mexico if the U.S. government bars him from producing human clones there.

The health ministry in a statement expressed its "broadest repudiation" of the idea, after scientist Richard Seed said that if prohibited from cloning humans as a solution to infertility in the United States, he would take his project to Mexico.

Mr. Seed said in interviews Wednesday he planned to set up human clone clinics in the Chicago area to produce cloned children.

Mr. Seed said that U.S. President Bill Clinton "does not have the power to stop me, at the moment," but that if the U.S. government did stop him he would go to another country, specifically mentioning Mexico.

The ministry called the suggestion "irresponsible" and said it showed a "deep lack of knowledge of Mexican health policy."

"In Mexico, scientific research ... and the medical practice follow ethical guidelines and (have) a profound respect for human dignity," the statement said.

Dr. Manuel Velasco, president of the National Bioethics Commission, told local media that "the Mexican congress must legislate to prohibit this type of experiment in the country."

Paraguayan general and presidential candidate is jailed indefinitely

ASUNCION (AFP) — Ex-army commander and presidential candidate Lino Oviedo was ordered to be kept in detention indefinitely Friday by a military tribunal investigating his alleged role in an attempted coup in 1996.

Mr. Oviedo, who is currently serving a 30-day jail sentence for insulting President Juan Carlos Wasmosy, was expected to be released Jan. 11 and hit the campaign trail, but will now remain in prison.

Mr. Wasmosy's lawyer Carlos Monges said the special military tribunal's decision was "unconstitutional and arbitrary," adding that it was contrived to torpedo Mr. Oviedo's chances in the May 10 elections.

The campaign will kick off Jan. 12, one day after Mr. Oviedo's 30-day prison sentence was to have ended.

The special tribunal was set up Dec. 31 after two members of Chile's Supreme Court ruled that military judges had the right to deliberate in the failed April 1996 coup attempt against Mr. Wasmosy.

Mr. Wasmosy appointed the five generals who make

up the special tribunal.

Mr. Oviedo's followers Friday vowed to organise massive demonstrations to demand that the tribunal reverse its decision and set Mr. Oviedo free.

Being jailed is only one of Mr. Oviedo's problems. Thursday, he was formally accused by a former Paraguayan diplomat of trafficking in German toxic waste between 1989 and 1994.

Hundreds of suspicious metal drums stored at the capital's port are pending a 10-day investigation ordered by a criminal judge.

Again, Mr. Oviedo's lawyers maintain this is just another farce dreamt up to derail Mr. Oviedo's presidential campaign.

Mr. Oviedo's troubles began on April 22, 1996, when he was accused of plotting a coup d'état. He was stripped of his powers and jailed for 54 days, only to be released after a court said the charges were baseless.

In September, he went against Mr. Wasmosy's express wishes and ran in the ruling Colorado Party's primary, trouncing party leader Luis María Argana, who then failed in getting the Supreme Court of

Electoral Justice to annul the vote.

The presidential election in this nation of 5.5 million is set for May 10. Mr. Wasmosy is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term. In October, Mr. Oviedo, a quirky, diminutive equestrian champion who once addressed the Argentine, Spanish and U.S. media in German, went into hiding after Mr. Wasmosy sentenced him to 30 days in jail for "insulting" him.

Mr. Oviedo charged Mr. Wasmosy with corruption. Mr. Wasmosy says Mr. Oviedo is a menace to democracy.

Mr. Oviedo gave himself up to military authorities Dec. 26, probably timing his release for the start of his election campaign. He was wrong.

Mr. Oviedo's lawyers, followers and some political analysts point out that all of Mr. Oviedo's legal troubles have been concocted to stop him from running for president.

Francisco Appleyard, a lawyer, candidate to the senate and a close friend of Mr. Oviedo, said there was no legal impediment to Mr. Oviedo's winning the election while he is in jail.

Cambodian fictional fighting continues, heavy fights expected

BANGKOK (AFP) — Sporadic fighting between Cambodia's warring factions continued Saturday around the royalist stronghold of O'Smach on the border with Thailand, Thai military sources said.

Forces loyal to strongman Hun Sen fired one rocket at the hilltop town of O'Smach which missed its target and landed about five kilometres inside Thailand, a Thai military officer on the border said.

There were no casualties reported. The officer said heavy fighting was expected to resume next week after government reinforcements arrived.

"The intensity of the fighting may pick up later next week as reinforcements and increased military manoeuvring are expected," he said.

Fighting has been sporadic and relatively light since it resumed after a brief lull over the New Year.

Outnumbered troops loyal to ousted co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh have been entrenched in their border stronghold since August, despite several major offensives by government troops.

Hun Sen ousted Norodom Ranariddh in July when he ordered tanks on to the streets of Phnom Penh and chased the royalist troops into the countryside.

side.



Hollywood star Richard Gere greets two Tibetan monks after presiding over his photo exhibition in Taipei (Reuters photo)

Actor Gere encounters protesters in Taiwan tour

TAIPEI (AFP) — Some 40 right-wingers staged a protest against Richard Gere, accusing him of supporting Tibetan independence, before the popular U.S. actor opened a photo exhibition here Saturday.

Television showed protesters shouting "Yankee go home" and "Tibet is part of China" outside the exhibition. They scuffled briefly with security guards upon Gere's arrival.

The protesters were kept outside the building. A woman accompanying Gere was slightly hurt. "Only in a democratic country can you hear a different voice," Gere said.

Gere, known for his campaign for freedom in Tibet, met President Lee Teng-hui Friday at the start of a three-day visit to promote his album of photographs of Tibet and to raise funds for charity. The pair exchanged

views on religion. Gere said that studying Zen Buddhism and following Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama had a great influence on him.

Mr. Lee said he also studied Zen when he was young before he became a Christian.

The Hollywood celebrity also met Taipei City Mayor Chen Shui-bien and the government spokesman David Lee.

Austria presses U.S. over seized paintings

VIENNA (AFP) — Austria appealed Friday to the U.S. government to act quickly to determine the fate of two paintings by Expressionist master Egon Schiele seized in New York after they were claimed by two Jewish families.

Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel told reporters he had demanded "the total clarification of the question of ownership" of the two canvases, seized Wednesday from New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

The message was transmitted to the U.S. State Department through the Austrian embassy in Washington.

But Mr. Schuessel added: "Austria's justified interests must be protected," referring to the paintings which were part of the Leopold collection on loan to the New York gallery.

"The Leopold Foundation constitutes part of our precious national cultural heritage," he said.

Austrian collector Rudolf Leopold's Foundation had loaned Portrait of Wally and Dead City to the Museum

of Modern Art. They were seized Wednesday after the family of a New York Times columnist, "Rita" Reif, claimed the rights to "Dead City" as heirs to Fritz Gruenbaum, a Jewish art collector who died at the Dachau concentration camp in 1940.

The other work, Portrait of Wally, was claimed by the family of Lea Bondi Jaray, a Jewish art dealer forced to abandon her collection in Vienna when she fled for London in 1938 when Nazi Germany annexed Austria.

The U.S. State Department said it had discussed the controversy with one of the claimants last week and had been in contact with Austrian diplomats in Washington and officials in Vienna.

"We are encouraged that the Austrians and the foundation have indicated their willingness to resolve the issue of ownership amicably," spokesman James Rubin said.

In Austria, a local branch of the Jewish group B'nai B'rith criticised Austria's handling of the affair however.

It claimed Austria had "not, unlike Germany, returned to Jewish citizens after 1945 all the goods stolen during the Nazi period."

Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938.

Mr. Leopold said he bought Portrait of Wally in an Austrian gallery in the 1950s, in exchange for another painting, and had acquired Dead City in an exchange deal in the 1960s from New York art dealer Otto Kallir.

Constance Lowenthal, an official with the World Jewish Congress investigating stolen art, said she was disappointed by the seizure since the Leopold Foundation had agreed to an unprecedented proposal to submit its ownership claim to an international tribunal.

Mr. Leopold said on Austrian television that the U.S. seizure could have consequences for other foreign collectors thinking of loaning their works for exhibition in the United States.

"Paintings from the Leopold Foundation will certainly not be shown in the United States in the near future," he said.

'Soviets financed Australian communists during cold war'

SYDNEY (AFP) — Documents uncovered in the archives of the former Soviet Union show for the first time that Communist parties in Australia were financed by Moscow at the height of the cold war, a report said Saturday.

Rumours of "Moscow Gold" funding of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) have been around since the 1940s when it was claimed money was sent to Australia via Czechoslovakia.

Then, Australia had the largest Communist Party per capita in the Western World.

The historical significance of the papers is that they appear to refute repeated claims by the CPA that it was an independent organisation that neither sought nor received money from the Soviets.

The Brisbane Courier-Mail, which uncovered and translated the documents, said it had spent a year exploring Soviet archives in a bid to support allegations it published in 1995 that the late Australian historian Manning Clark was a Soviet agent.

It said the papers, including signed receipts and "strictly secret special file" minutes of meetings attended by senior Soviet leaders, also provided evidence to support claims made in 1954 by Soviet defector Vladimir Petrov that he acted as a courier for payments from the Soviets to Australian Communists.

Mr. Petrov, third secretary of the Soviet embassy in Canberra, said at the time the payments were to be used as a "fund for assistance to trade unions" in an era when the government here was attempting to oust Communism.

The information was subsequently used by Robert Menzies to help secure his reelection, and led to the 1954 Royal Commission into Espionage. Petrov died in Melbourne in 1991.

The material also appears to show that CPA General Secretary Lance Sharkey may have perjured himself when he told the Royal Commission that claims he had received Soviet help were "a complete slander and fabrication."

The documents uncovered show seven payments, equivalent to 6.06 million Australian dollars (\$4.34 million) in 1997, made between 1953 and 1966, the Courier-Mail said.

It said they were made through the International Trade Union Fund for Aid to Left Worker's Organisation, a body attached to the Romanian Council of Trade Unions and partly funded by China and most Eastern Bloc nations.

Bosnian co-premier's party slams CNN's description of war

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The party of Bosnia's war-time prime minister, Haris Silajdzic, Friday criticised the U.S. television network CNN, saying it had labelled the Bosnian conflict a "civil war."

Bosnia's Muslims have always contended that the war in Bosnia was primarily a war of aggression orchestrated by its neighbours, Croatia and Serbia, and not primarily a civil war.

The point is significant in

the context of ongoing war crimes trials at the U.N. tribunal in The Hague where certain crimes can only be tried if the conflict is judged to have been at least in part an international conflict.

Mr. Silajdzic's Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina claimed in a statement here Friday that the CNN Teletext service had recently claimed that the war was "a civil war" caused by an explosion of "ancient hatreds" among the people.

The party said it had sent CNN a letter of protest through the Bosnian embassy in Washington.

The interpretation of the war in Bosnia as a civil war "helps to indemnify the aggressor and the ideologues of the genocide and the greatest crimes against humanity committed in Europe since World War II," the party said.

A CNN spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

BBC, Reuter correspondent expelled from Guinea

CONAKRY (AFP) — Authorities in Guinea, west Africa, have expelled the local correspondent of the BBC and the Reuters news agency arrested last year on

charges of spying, a police source said Friday.

Foday Fofana, who worked for the two Western news organisations, was ordered to return to his

native Sierra Leone, the police source said.

Mr. Fofana was arrested on Oct. 13 and charged with "spying for a foreign power." After his arrest he

was held in Conakry's central prison.

A Guinean court Wednesday ordered Mr. Fofana's expulsion, said the source.

German authorities to close historic Berlin airport

BERLIN (AFP) — German federal and state authorities want to close down Berlin's Tempelhof airport, which played a vital role in keeping the city alive during the Soviet blockade nearly 50 years ago.

The Berlin transport administration said Friday that the Bonn government and the states of Berlin and Brandenburg had applied to end the use of Tempelhof by around

2002.

The authorities plan to give the united city a major new international facility.

Tempelhof was the main airport for the Berlin airlift, when the Western allies flew in some 2.3 mil-

lion tonnes of food and other supplies to the city between June 1948 and September 1949. Soviet forces closed off all land access in a bid to prevent the creation of West Germany.



Canadian soldiers from Valcartier clear ice-covered trees from the streets of St. Hyacinthe. The city of St. Hyacinthe, 60 kms east of Montreal, has been completely without power for four days (Reuters photo)

Canadian army sent in to fight effects of winter storm

MONTREAL (AFP) — Some 2,000 soldiers were deployed Friday to help restore electricity and staff emergency shelters in areas of southern Quebec hit by a winter storm that cut power to millions of people.

Renewed freezing rain hit the region Friday, but weather forecasters said conditions were already at their worst and would improve starting Saturday.

Snow and freezing rain also hit northeastern U.S. states, cutting power to nearly 500,000 inhabitants of New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont, weather forecasters said.

Maine was likely to get more rain or snow late Friday or early Saturday, particularly in the central part of the state, meteorologist Tom McClelland told AFP by telephone.

Canadian press reports said 20 people have died here since the severe winter storm struck the region. Many others have suffered broken bones and there have been cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Some 200 communities were under a state of emergency.

Insurance company officials estimated the damage from the storm at some 500 million Canadian dollars (\$350 million), making it the most costly natural disaster in Canadian history.

More than 60 millimetres of freezing rain has fallen on the region since Monday, causing trees and power lines to collapse and leading to power outages that still left some three million people in the dark Friday.

The situation was marginally better in nearby Ontario, where 80,000 households were without power, while 25,000 homes suffered the same fate in the maritime provinces.

Huge tree branches felled by the storm — as well as snow and patches of ice — made the streets in the Montreal area tough going, and had seriously damaged some parked cars, but had injured no one yet.

The 2,000 troops, who joined the 600 already on hand, left their base in Valcartier, near Quebec, late Thursday on a mission to help technicians from the Hydro-Quebec power company or help staff emergency shelters.

One soldier was seriously injured when the troop transport truck in which he was travelling crashed on an icy road.

The storm drove several thousands of people to the more than 150 emergency shelters — including nine in Montreal — in Quebec province. Due to a lack of folding beds, some were forced to sleep on the floor.

Regional police were called in after some looting was reported in houses left vacant by their occupants.

While most schools closed Tuesday, major universities shut their doors Friday, as did some large businesses like Pratt and Whitney, whose employees were told to return Monday.

Radio-Canada was operating with a skeleton crew. Many government workers were on call as well.

Train service was spotty due to downed power lines, trees fallen across tracks as well as frozen switches and signals. Flights into and out of Montreal's Dorval airport were affected as well.

Cher and other celebrities eulogise Sonny Bono

PALM SPRINGS, California (AFP) — Cher, half of the popular Sonny and Cher duo of the 1960s, wept and joked Friday as she eulogised her ex-husband and pop star-turned politician Sonny Bono who was killed in a skiing accident.

"I've been working on this stupid eulogy for the last 48 hours," she said weeping and waving a handful of papers. "Of course, I know this would make Sonny really happy," she joked as those gathered laughed.

"This is probably the most important thing I've ever done in my life," said Cher, who first met Sonny Bono when she was 16. Their relationship started with romance and later became an enduring friendship. "I know he is someplace loving this."

The two-term congressman died Monday while on vacation with his wife, Mary, and their two children when he slammed into a tree at a ski resort on the California-Nevada border. He was 62.

At a funeral service packed by politicians and show-biz celebrities at Saint Theresa's Roman Catholic Church, Cher recalled the evolution of the singing duo during the liberal 1960s.

"He was smart enough to take an introverted 16-year-old girl and a scrappy little Italian guy with a bad voice and turn them into the most successful and beloved couple of this generation," she said.

She said Sonny Bono swept her away despite his "weird hairdo" somewhere between Caesar and Napoleon.

"As a matter of fact, one of the first things he told me was he was a descendant of Napoleon and that his father had shortened his name from Bonaparte to Sonny Bono," she said as those gathered laughed heartily.

Those eulogising Bono crossed the emotional spectrum from sorrow to humour, borrowing heavily from Bono's own lyrics.

"I can just hear Sonny greeting St. Peter: 'Hey, you got me babe,'" said California Governor Pete Wilson.

Television networks provided live coverage of the funeral.

Flowers covered Bono's star on the town's Walk of Stars just as the Palm Springs International Film Festival was getting under way, a project Bono instituted in 1990 as this city's mayor.

He was born Sonny Salvatore Bono in February 1935 to a first-generation Sicilian-American family in Detroit, Michigan. The family moved to the Los Angeles area in 1942.

After high school, Sonny Bono ignored his parents' advice to study medicine and began writing songs while working as a truck driver.

"He refused to accept it

Press still divided over Mo Mowlam's talks with paramilitaries despite success

LONDON (AFP) — The British press Saturday remained divided over the wisdom of the government's first talks with Northern Ireland's paramilitaries for three decades.

Many commentators agreed that the gamble by Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam, risking accusations of being held to ransom by terror, had paid off after Protestant paramilitaries decided not to pull their political representatives out of peace talks.

The loyalist decision to continue discussions brought to an end two weeks in which Ulster was again on the brink of a return to full-scale violence between Roman Catholics who want a united Ireland and Protestants who want to remain British rule.

"The gamble pays off," wrote the left-of-centre Guardian in its headline.

"Mo Mowlam deserves a loud, hopeful cheer of congratulation," it wrote inside. "Her powers of persuasion seemed to have moved the hardmen."

The Independent agreed, writing that her "ground-breaking ... audacious ... most unconventional ... initiative" had been "triumphantly vindicated."

And the tabloid Mirror, most loyal to the government of all newspapers, said the loyalist decision to stay with the talks "was as near a triumph as anything can be in this fraught situation."

The Times praised "the courageous decision that was 'very Mo'." "Yesterday Dr. Mowlam proved the doubters wrong," it said.

The Express, which had condemned Ms. Mowlam's meeting inside the Maze prison, also agreed that her gamble "had won over the hardmen."

But other rightwing papers took a different view.

The Daily Mail, which conceded that Ms. Mowlam "deserves credit for her courage and sheer persistence," said "that encounter in the Maze was a watershed."

"The gunmen and the bombers must now believe that they have the whip hand," it said. Mainstream parties would now be "looking even more anxiously over their shoulders for the reaction of the gangsters," it said.

The Daily Telegraph, which has been most outspoken in its criticism of Ms. Mowlam, said: "The loyalist paramilitaries effectively held a gun to the Northern Ireland secretary's head and, having got enough from her to satisfy them, let their hostage walk free."

The Telegraph also said it had learned that Prime Minister Tony Blair had prepared a blueprint of a settlement plan, which proposed a power-sharing assembly in Northern Ireland and cross-border institutions with limited powers.

The plan, which follows the line of proposals much mooted in the past, appealed to loyalists, it said, and hence they had decided to stay in the talks.

The mass-selling Sun, British biggest paper, was most blunt.

"The terrorists have scored a victory," it said.

"They have got themselves involved in the Ulster peace talks by bombing and shooting. That is the effect of Ulster Secretary Mo Mowlam's visit to the Maze murderers."

Blair 'draws up pro-unionist blueprint for Northern Ireland settlement'

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair has drawn up a draft peace settlement for Northern Ireland, the Daily Telegraph reported Saturday.

Mr. Blair's plan, still not finalised, would establish a council including British and Irish members alongside a semi-autonomous assembly for the province, the paper said.

It would also limit the powers of north-south cross-border institutions, the report added.

The proposal, which follows the lines of other schemes mooted in the past, would be more likely to appeal to Protestant unionists than to Roman Catholic nationalists, the paper said.

Unionists have long opposed giving cross-border bodies any more than limited powers, and the council would ensure further British participation in Northern Irish affairs.

Unionists have themselves floated the idea for a "Council of the British Isles" drawing members from Belfast, Dublin and London and the planned elected bodies in Scotland and Wales.

However while pleasing unionists, the proposals would be almost certain to be opposed by Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The Telegraph added that the blueprint had already been discussed with David Trimble, the leader of Northern Ireland's largest party, the Ulster Unionists.

Downing Street was said to be seeking the support of Dublin and the main nationalist party in Northern Ireland, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).

Early Saturday Downing Street would neither confirm nor deny the report.

A spokesman would say only: "We are keen to see the various participants in the talks come up with all sort of ideas."

"We don't believe it's helpful to talk about specific proposals until they are tabled."

"Nor is it helpful to talk about who has penned what."

Opposition still sidelined as Cubans head to the polls

HAVANA (AFP) — Cubans who head to the polls Sunday will endorse a list of Communist candidates for national and provincial assemblies, while others exercise their choice not to vote.

There is not a single opposition candidate among the 601 would-be assembly deputies, and 1,192 candidates for the 14 provincial assemblies.

In the strictest legal terms, there is a route to the National Assembly for a member of the country's splintered opposition.

Legally, anyone can come forward as a potential candidate in open-air pre-nominating meetings.

But in practice, nominations are decided by residents' public raising of hands at those gatherings where government-sponsored social organisations are out in force and hold sway.

Since 1992, all Cubans regardless of ideological political bent and including acting military staff have had the explicit right to candidacy, as long as they are mentally fit, have resided in Cuba for five years prior to the vote and do not fall under any constitutional exception.

But the very structure of the electoral system itself leaves outlawed opposition groups little room for manoeuvre.

There are about 100 such groups around the country with a total of some 2,000 official members, according to opposition sources.

The electoral system on its smallest scale starts in every Cuban's neighbourhood, where residents raise hands to nominate between two and eight candidates for district delegate. There are more than 14,000 such posts nationwide.

Some voters have proposed dissidents as candidates for district delegate posts, such as in San Miguel del Padron near Havana. But the opposition members didn't make it past the public hand-raising stage.

On Nov. 25, a dissident with a Christian Democratic bent, Oswaldo Paya Sardinias, delivered to the town assembly of Cerro, in Havana, a petition on which 96 citizens proposed him as a National Assembly candidate. He cited a constitutional right to have authorities respond to a citizen request according to the law.

According to Mr. Paya, nine other dissidents did the same in other home districts.

"Still, none of the opposition members was either proposed or nominated," Mr. Paya said.

A National Assembly source said that would-be dissident candidates were considered, but that capacity and political merit had to be taken into account.

"It would be extremely difficult under current conditions for such a candidacy to move forward," one assembly member said privately.

According to the government electoral commission, more than 60,000 people came forward as interested in the National Assembly seats in the pre-nominating stage.

From that emerged the total of 601 "candidates" for the National Assembly, the same number as the number of seats. The voting is to confirm their nominations; there won't be surprise winners.

Of the 601 seats, 50 per cent were to go to winners of October primary voting, and 50 per cent to nominees from pro-government associations such as the lone legal Workers Union, and farmers', women's and student groups.

So, such as it is, the electoral system can catapult the humblest of farmers from the most isolated corner of the country to a seat in the National Assembly, but keep a dissident from downtown Havana out.

President Fidel Castro, who has called Cuba's electoral system "the most democratic in the world," at November's Ibero-American Summit came under heavy fire from many Latin American counterparts for pledging publicly to defend political pluralism, which they say he does not.

India's Congress banks on 'goddess' Sonia Gandhi for votes

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ailing Congress party has focused solely on Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born wife of assassinated former Premier Rajiv Gandhi, in publicity material for upcoming polls, a daily said Saturday.

The Pioneer newspaper said posters, video films and slogans compared the 51-year-old widow to Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, and paid homage to the Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty.

Sonia Gandhi, who has no political experience, will start her campaign for the February-March elections Sunday at the site of her husband's murder, in Sriperumbudur (Tamil Nadu).

She has so far remained silent on whether she will be a candidate.

The Pioneer said one advertising agency hired by the Congress had packaged the entire Gandhi family as India's saviours, calling Indira Gandhi a tender mother, Rajiv Gandhi a loving leader and finally Sonia, the "goddess Lakshmi who will light a lamp in every home."

The traditional lamp symbolises happiness and wealth in India.

Another poster described the "hitherto reclusive Gandhi, who lives amid tight security in the heart of New Delhi, as the new icon of India."

The slogan said: "She will bring a fresh wave of joy, the new Gandhi of a new era."

Sonia Gandhi has shed her reclusive image and opened the gates of her bungalow at 10, Janpath, one of India's best-known addresses, to the public three days ago. The move has sparked an overwhelming response with milling crowds from faraway villages.

Witnesses said Sonia Gandhi has been more attentive to villagers and the poor in the public audience and constantly speaking in Hindi, a language in which she is fluent.

The spotlight on the widow has sparked suggestions that there was a "cold war" between Sitaram Kesri, the octogenarian Congress president and Sonia Gandhi for the party's leadership.

Mr. Kesri Friday angrily denied any animosity saying Sonia Gandhi was the "undisputed leader" of the Congress and that he was ready to quit his post the moment she wanted to take over.

Sources in the Congress said Mr. Kesri had been totally ignored in an election video.

A member of the Congress election committee said it was "amazing" how the nine advertising agencies hired by the party had by themselves ignored Kesri.

"Only one agency has come up with a poster of Kesri," he said.

The election material will be formally approved by the party's campaign committee later.

The Congress was voted out of office in 1996 in the worst electoral defeat in its 112-year history. The party was dominated for much of this century by the Gandhi-Nehru family including Indira Gandhi's father Jawaharlal Nehru and her grandfather Motilal Nehru.

H. Kong to set up central poultry slaughterhouse to stop bird flu

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong authorities are considering setting up a central poultry slaughterhouse in a bid to stop the future spread of any bird flu, which has claimed four lives here, health officials said Saturday.

"It is still just an idea," said the official, adding "we have various other options to consider."

These options included the slaughtering of ducks, which were found to contain the H5 virus, to a similar mass slaughter of chickens last month after they were found to be infected with the deadly H5N1 virus.

A spokesman for the health department said the H5 virus is common to ducks and geese and is harmless in them but deadly to chickens when transmitted.

It was still not known whether the government would slaughter all ducks found in the territory after samples taken from ducks in markets here during the chicken cull showed traces of the H5 virus.

The results of the tests on ducks and other poultry were expected to be known sometime next week.

However, the health spokesman pointed out that ducks in farms in Hong Kong showed no traces of the H5N1 virus.

The H5N1 virus had previously been found only in birds and the Hong Kong outbreak fuelled fears of a possible international epidemic should human-to-human transmission be proved.

Meanwhile, health officials at the Atlanta Disease Control Centre said they were increasingly confident bird flu was not spreading from person to person but this could not be totally ruled out.

Press reports said the World Health Organisation considered that chickens were unlikely to have been the source of the bird flu and the organisation was screening 16 species of birds and animals.

Until Friday there had been 16 confirmed cases and one suspected case of H5N1 infection. A six-year-old boy has been deleted from the list of suspected cases. Four people have died since last May and five are still in hospital — three of them critically ill.

Hong Kong closed poultry farms and markets last month before the slaughter and has banned the import of chickens from China until early next month.

China has denied the bird flu virus has been detected on the mainland although it admitted that the illness killed 1.7 million chickens in the southern province of Guangdong bordering Hong Kong last year.

"This virus is not present in Chinese territory, according to quarantine services," foreign ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said Thursday.

However WHO official Hiroshi Kida was quoted as saying in Taiwan last week that authorities in Guangdong province hid information about a bird flu epidemic which killed 1.7 million chickens in February and March.

Actor Slater loses bid to skip jail time

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A judge Friday gave actor Christian Slater until Jan. 14 — a day after his latest film's premiere — to begin serving his 90-day jail term for misdemeanor battery and drug convictions.

Slater's attorney Michael Nasitir tried unsuccessfully to persuade Judge Joseph Biderman to give Slater jail time credit for the 118 days he spent at a lockdown drug rehabilitation centre after his Aug. 11 arrest.

Slater, 28, was taken into custody then after a party brawl at a posh apartment building where authorities said he bit the boyfriend of Marlon Brando's adopted daughter, Petra, in the stomach.

Fuelled by the cocaine, heroin and alcohol that he admitted taking, Slater also attacked an officer who tried to apprehend him. He was finally shackled. His blood-alcohol level was three times the legal limit.

Along with the jail term, Mr. Biderman ordered Slater to pay nearly \$1,300 in fines, stay away from those he attacked and to take an AIDS test, and AIDS education class and get domestic violence counselling.

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Fatalism in fighting peace

AS EXPECTED the U.S. envoy to the Middle East, Dennis Ross, is returning to Washington empty-handed after his brief visit to the region. This is not of course the first time that Ross fails to hudge Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from his hardline position on the peace process nor probably would it be the last. But his failure this time around, just as on previous occasions, cannot be the end of U.S. attempts to save the process from collapse.

It can be said that Ross' mandate has not exactly been to reach agreement between Israel and the Palestinians since a breakthrough would have to be achieved not now, on the eve of the projected visits to Washington by both Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, but at the conclusion of talks with President Bill Clinton. At best Ross was here to make sure those talks would be productive.

True, Netanyahu is busy hardening his bargaining posture by ruling out more than one Israeli pullback from the Palestinian territories and announcing plans to build 30,000 new housing units by 2020. In addition, he has also pledged to declare well in advance of his arrival in Washington the size of any conditional redeployment in a bid to foreclose making any concessions to the president. Yet, it is inconceivable that Clinton would go ahead with his plans to meet with the two leaders in the absence of a probable cause for optimism. If in fact the declared positions of the Israeli government on the size and frequency of redeployment are his final word then there would be no reason for him to see the American president or vice versa.

The prime minister must walk a thin line between his struggle to stay in office through appealing his hardline coalition partners and the realities dictated by the past agreements with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the apparent determination of the Clinton administration to make the negotiations succeed. If no breakthrough is achieved at the White House, however, Netanyahu may not only incur the wrath of the Americans but also run the risk of losing his Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and possibly his grip on power altogether. With a majority of only one member in the Knesset and a deteriorating economy, the stage could be set for the Netanyahu government's downfall. If the prime minister's bottom line is to retain power, and nothing else, soon he will discover that his chances will be much worse if all that he ends up is a dead peace process and no hope of reconciliation with Israel's Arab neighbours in his lifetime.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AI Rai's Fahed Fanek attacked the Syrian information services for using Jordanian writings voicing criticism of the Kingdom's participation in the Turkish-Israeli military exercises as a means to attack Jordan. Jordanian writers have expressed dissatisfaction with the government's decision to send an observer to these exercises because, Dr. Fanek said, this move was not in the interest of the country or the Arab World. But it is improper for Syria to take advantage of the Jordanian writers' stand vis-a-vis this issue and use articles in the Jordanian press as a tool for waging a propaganda attack against the Kingdom, he said. Jordan's attendance at the exercises as an observer is not tantamount to conspiracy and does not resemble in any way Syria's alliance with Iran against Iraq or Syria's joining the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in the second Gulf war, noted the writer. He said, in Jordan, writers have the freedom to criticise their government and hence Jordanian press was full of criticism of the country's attendance at the military exercises. But, he added, in Syria, where the press has no freedom, one does not find any criticism of the Syrian government's actions in any way. It is true, said the writer, that Jordanians oppose any participation in the Turkish-Israeli exercises but Jordanians object strongly to Syria's alliance with Iran against another Arab country.

AI Rai's daily tackled in an editorial the latest mission of U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to the region, describing it as a total failure. Now that Ross has failed to bring the Palestinian and Israeli views closer and has been unsuccessful in breaking the deadlock in the peace negotiations, the task is left to U.S. President Clinton later this month to try to achieve a breakthrough, said the paper. It is no secret that it was Israel which created insurmountable obstacles for Ross, thus making it impossible for him to achieve any positive results because Israel has expressed determination to destroy the peace accords with the Palestinians, according to the paper. Ross has asked the Israelis to carry out the redeployment of its forces in the West Bank and temporarily freeze the Jewish settlement construction programme, but these demands have been dashed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government, the paper said. The U.S. envoy hoped that the Palestinians and the Israelis would resume peace talks once these obstacles were removed, but he was disappointed, and so the whole task is now referred to the U.S. president who, said the paper, is the only person capable of forcing Israel to comply with the requirements of peace.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Aqaba too sensitive for a free zone

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

THE POWERS that be in today's world despise national sovereignty and look down at it as something that belongs to the past and should therefore fade away sooner than later, to give way to the rising culture of globalisation. Borders separating countries should, according to this line of thinking, become irrelevant, and accordingly the world should be allowed to evolve into a global village, with one market completely open for the movement of people, capital, goods, services, culture and information.

The declaration of a spot in the oative land as a free zone means giving up three quarters of the national sovereignty over that spot as most laws of the land would no longer apply to free zones including, but not limited to, currency regulations, income tax, customs duty and general sales tax.

When an area is already inhabited with population and yet declared a free zone the result would be that area will effectively be detached from the native land, and become accessible to all nationalities indiscriminately. In other words such an area would, for all practical purposes be internationalised.

The above facts are stated having in mind the ill-advised idea of transforming the whole city of Aqaba into a free zone, which means that Jordan's sovereignty over Aqaba will be severely undermined. Custom barriers will be installed between Aqaba and the rest of the

country, while all barriers between Aqaba and the world will be abolished or removed.

Once Aqaba becomes a free zone, the Saudis and Israelis will be able to deal with Aqaba, live in Aqaba, and do business with Aqaba in an easier manner than Jordanians.

Once Aqaba becomes a free zone, the Saudis and Israelis will be able to deal with Aqaba, live in Aqaba, and do business with Aqaba in an easier manner than Jordanians. Goods produced in Aqaba will be treated as foreign products and accordingly prevented from entering Jordan except after going through the usual routine customs procedures. Likewise Jordanian products will lose the Aqaba market due to lack of protection, let alone loss of revenue to the treasury which we don't know how will be recouped if Aqaba becomes a tax haven.

It is no secret that international institutions, such as the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are, by definition, cross-border institutions, do encourage absolute openness. They loathe national sovereignty and political borders as barriers. They encourage developing countries to take bold steps against their own sovereignty. They are natural supporters of free zones. If it were up to their leaders, the whole world will be declared a free zone as soon as possible.

Therefore, asking the World Bank to evaluate the project of transforming Aqaba into a free zone is a waste of time. The outcome is known in advance. If Jordan is willing to open up Aqaba to all nationals of neighbouring and distant countries, the World Bank will be glad, not only to extend its blessing, but also to underwrite the financing of the costly project, as Jordan, and not the free zone, will have to repay the principal and the compound interest thereon.

Even if it were true that having free zones in Jordan is a feasible project in order to induce economic growth and create more job opportunities, Aqaba should be the last place to be considered for this purpose, owing to its narrow terrain, lack of job seekers, sensitivity of the place, and not being an underdeveloped part of the country. The present activities taking place in Aqaba in industry, tourism, and transportation sectors are exceeding the capacity of the city which is already overloaded with activities and crowded with projects.

Justice in the eye of the beholder

By Ray Hanania

SEVERAL MAJOR American newspapers recently carried very expensive, full page advertisements entitled "If We Forget..."

The ads reminded the world of the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded in midair on Dec. 21, 1988, killing 259 passengers and 11 people on the ground in Lockerbie, Scotland.

And, the ads alleged that two Libyan nationals, Lamen Khalifa Fhimah and Abdel Basset Ali Al-Meghrabi, are responsible. It offers a \$4 million reward for information on the two suspects, who were indicted by a U.S. court.

The United States used its power to force the United Nations to impose an embargo on Libya, demanding that the two suspects be extradited to England or the United States. Libya has refused, responding that the two should be extradited to a "neutral" country where they have a better than even chance of receiving a fair trial.

In this case, the United States government is not really interested in justice.

Libyan refusal to surrender the two suspects to America's kangaroo court — a mock court in which the principles of justice are disregarded or perverted — has given the United States plenty of ammunition to pun-

ish Libya, which has remained a stalwart critic of Israel and American double standards.

Libya has offered to compensate the families of the victims, but the victims have refused.

You see, in America, the life of one American does not have a price tag. The life of a foreigner, however, can be evaluated in terms of dollars.

Five months before Pan Am Flight 103 crashed in a fiery explosion, gunneth on the USS Vincennes, ostensibly patrolling international waters off the coast of Iran, fired upon an Iranian Airbus A300, destroying the aircraft and killing all 290 people on board.

The ship's commander claimed his crew "mistook" the giant commercial Boeing 747 plane for a much smaller, military F-14 fighter jet.

A hastily arranged investigation by the United States blamed one "operations officer," and issued the lowest possible punishment, a letter of reprimand placed in the unknown officer's personnel file. Behind-the-scenes, U.S. officials spread rumours that the Airbus had been pre-loaded with dead bodies and was intentionally sent to the war zone believing it would be shot down to create a situation to rebuke the Americans.

For more than four years, U.S. officials

iosisted the Airbus pilots were at fault and veered out of Iranian airspace into international waters, hereby justifying the attack. Finally, in 1992, evidence surfaced that in fact, the Iranian airliner had been on course and was in Iranian airspace. It was the USS Vincennes that had been off course by more than 20 miles.

Additional evidence showed that the commander of the American cruiser, Capt. Will C. Rogers III, may have intentionally shot the commercial airline down, and that he was egging for such a military hit. The Vincennes had been called into the waters near Iran as a result of the Iran-Iraq war, and its officers claimed tiny little Iranian gunboats had fired upon the massive U.S. cruiser.

In all the bluster from then President Ronald Reagan, he never once expressed remorse for the murder of the 290 Muslim civilians.

The United States has never publicly apologised for the downing of the commercial plane, and has resisted all efforts by the Iranians to interrogate Capt. Rogers and his crew.

However, the United States was quick to offer monetary compensation to the families of the 290 victims. More than \$131 million was paid to sweep the controversy under the

rug. Iranian protests to the United Nations were muted by allies of the United States government.

No U.N. embargo was imposed on the United States.

No full page advertisements were purchased calling for the extradition of Will C. Rogers. All evidence suggests he knew it was a commercial Iranian airliner, but wanted to bring it down anyway.

The families of the victims of the Airbus A300 did not form a special organisation to hire lawyers to exact punishment from the Americans. They weren't given a forum on national American television, as were family members of the Pan Am 103 disaster.

And, no court marshal was held to indict Will C. Rogers for a crime that he and the U.S. Navy struggled to cover up these past 10 years.

Maybe the victims of Pan Am 103 downed off of Lockerbie, Scotland do deserve justice.

But do they deserve any more justice than the victims of the Iranian Airbus A300?

The writer is Palestinian American journalist and author. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Vanunu, Shahrastani: For following their conscience, they 'deserve recognition'

"THE ATTITUDE toward my case needs to be on the ground of respecting my action as an act that helped all the world, even Israel."

— Mordechai Vanunu, Jan. 19, 1996

By Gwynne Dyer

NOBODY HAS actually seen Mordechai Vanunu's face for 10 years except his two brothers, who take turns making the sole permitted fortnightly visit to Ashkelon prison, and the Israeli guards outside his 9 ft. by 6 ft. (3m by 2m) cell. When his protests against solitary confinement occasionally get as far as a court appearance, his jailers cover his head with a mask. And he never gets any mercy.

Vanunu's crime, for which he was sentenced to 18 years in solitary confinement, was to fly to London in 1986 and tell the "Sunday Times" newspaper all he knew about Israel's nuclear weapons programme. He had been a low-level technician at Israel's nuclear facility at Dimona, but from the information and photographs he provided, experts were able to deduce that Israel then had between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons.

The Israeli government, which has never publicly admitted (or denied) owning nuclear weapons, was furious at this revelation, and acted ruthlessly to silence him. A female Israeli agent lured Vanunu from Britain to Italy — where he was kidnapped, drugged, and shipped back to Israel in a crate for punishment.

But that was a long time ago, and there's nothing new on the case, so why bring it up now? Because 10 years is a good round figure that could capture the public imagination — and it's time for nominations for the next Nobel Peace Prize.

The Nobel Peace Prize is a tool, and applied to the right problem it can do wonders. It helps to protect democratic leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi from the wrath of the generals who rule Burma, as it once protected nuclear physicist and peace advocate Andrei Sakharov from the anger of the communist tyrants who ruled the old

Soviet Union. It might help to free Vanunu, or at least end the vengeful cruelty of his solitary confinement.

This is an urgent matter, for there are signs that a whole decade alone is affecting Vanunu's mental stability. "They want to drive him mad," says his brother Asher. "They want to harm him. They want revenge." Dr. Ruhama Marton, an Israeli psychiatrist who addressed a pro-Vanunu conference in Tel Aviv last October, agrees.

"The most common feeling people in solitary confinement have is that of extreme and profound anxiety," said Marton. "The feelings of deep abandonment and deep anxiety, coupled with the factors of thought disorder and hallucinations, rapidly put a person into a constant state of doubt and uncertainty in which they may lose their self-confidence, self-esteem, and finally their identity." Vanunu has had 10 years of this.

But there is a problem with nominating Vanunu for the Nobel Peace Prize: some are bound to see it as an anti-Israeli gesture rather than a campaign motivated by anti-nuclear and humanitarian sentiments. Fortunately, there is also a solution to the problem. He is called Dr. Hossein Shahrastani.

Shahrastani, like Vanunu, has spent a decade in prison for opposing the introduction of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, but he was rarely alone. He had torturers to keep him company, for he is an Iraqi, and the government whose nuclear ambitions he defied was that of Saddam Hussein.

Hossein Shahrastani trained in nuclear chemistry at the University of Toronto, and returned to Iraq to work in the government-run Atomic Energy Organisation at the time when Saddam Hussein was rising to supreme power. Shahrastani rose too, to become Saddam Hussein's chief scientific adviser — until the fateful day in 1979 when the Iraqi president ordered his scientists to start work on nuclear weapons, and Shahrastani defied him.

He was arrested on Dec. 4, 1979, and accused of treason. (As a Shiite Muslim, he was regarded as a poten-

tial traitor by the predominantly Sunni regime.) The torture began at once, and continued day and night. They tied his hands behind his back and then hoisted him into the air by them: "After a few minutes, the pain is so severe in your shoulders, the pain is unbearable." And then they applied an electric cattle prod to his genitals.

After 22 days the torture ended, but Shahrastani remained in Abu Ghorraib prison in Baghdad for a decade. For a time, security police moved into the house with his Canadian-born wife Bernice and their children Mohamed and Zahra, who saw him only once a month for the next 10 years. Once the regime offered to free the scientist if he would work on its nuclear weapons, but he refused.

Finally, miraculously, Shahrastani escaped from prison in one of the bombing raids on Baghdad during the Gulf War in 1991. He fled north with his family to Kurdistan, and from there was smuggled into Iran. He and his wife live in Tehran today, running an Iraqi refugee aid organisation.

Hossein Shahrastani is a brave and just man who would deserve a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize on his own merits. But he would never be awarded it on his own, any more than Mordechai Vanunu would. The politics of the rival nationalisms, Arab and Israeli, would get in the way.

A joint nomination of Vanunu and Shahrastani, on the other hand, would have an impartiality and a symmetry that rose above such considerations. They have each paid a great price for acting as their conscience dictates, and they deserve recognition. But most importantly, the Nobel Peace Prize is a tool that could save Vanunu by embarrassing the Israeli government into releasing him.

Vanunu has no more secrets to reveal, and there is no reason except revenge for Israel to keep him in such terrible isolation. He needs help from outside, and he is entitled to it.

LETTERS

Claims and counterclaims

To the editor:

AS THE senior elder of the Congregationalist Free Church in Bhamdoun, Lebanon, and the last in a family line of elders of this church since it was founded in 1863, I am familiar with the wrangles that go on over the worldly side to church affairs. And such a wrangle, reponedly has existed over the proprietorship of the Christ Church in Jerusalem for some time now.

As I do not live in Jerusalem, I am in no position to tell whether the claims and counterclaims involved in the case of the Christ Church are over who has the honour of claiming the connection with it, or who has the honour of disclaiming any such connection — the latter being seemingly the position of the Reverend John Chitham of Beirut, of the Reverend Stephen Griffith of Syria, and apparently also of the late Reverend Derrick Hearn of Jordan. Perhaps the Middle East Council of Churches in Jerusalem is a more appropriate address for a query of this nature?

The fact remains, however, that the CMS and the CMB, to take these two examples, are both Anglican missionary institutions, the CMS, like the largely Congregationalist American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), having initiated its activity in Ottoman Palestine in the early nineteenth century with the expressed hope of bringing the Gospel of Jesus to the Jews, albeit among others (see, for example, our publication The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819-1870; index under "Church Missionary Society," "Jews," etc.).

Another remaining fact is that the Christ Church, regardless of the side of the blanket on which it was born, is an offspring of Anglican evangelism — a matter which mainstream Anglicans worldwide, let alone in the Holy Land, naturally find hard to accept.

That the CMS as a general body has no sympathy for Zionist Christianity, and has actually been supportive of the Palestinian cause and of other issues of injustice throughout the world, is correct. This manner, however, is not relevant to the particular question of the Christ Church. The overriding theme of my article in the Jordan Times, which elicited a critical response from the Reverends Chitham and Griffith, focused primarily on the tone and content of the interview given to CNN by Reverend Ray Lockhart — which was dismissive of local Christianity and its age-long witness, and which was utterly objectionable to our societies and in their local ethos. (I now understand that this said interview is being repeated at regular intervals).

For corroborative evidence as to the connection between the Christ Church and Anglicanism, so unnecessarily embarrassing to mainstream Anglicans today, one may note that the Christ Church museum in Jerusalem was officially opened by former Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek on Jan. 21, 1992 — the 150th anniversary of the entrance into Jerusalem of the Jewish Anglican bishop, Michael Solomon Alexander.

Kamal Salibi
 Director
 Royal Institute for
 Inter-Faith Studies
 Amman

Continuing analysis of papyrus scrolls reveals new dimensions of life and economy in 6th century Petra

The writer is a retired Ministry of Labour office manager from Aqaba. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Consumer Protection Society: Floating of prices benefitted merchants in an uncontrollable manner

By Suha Ma'ayeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The cost of living in Jordan grew by eight per cent last year following the government's decision to float the prices of various basic commodities, the head of the Consumer Protection Society said Saturday.

"The floating of prices has benefitted the merchants in an uncontrollable manner," said Mohammad Obeidat.

The government, following IMF economic reforms since 1989, liberalised prices of most food items that were set by the Ministry of Supply. But most wages, especially those of civil servants, have not been increased for the past three years, thus reducing Jordanians' purchasing power and aggravating inflation.

Dr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times that a recent study of 717 commodities that was conducted by the society found "the cost of living rose by eight per cent

in 1997 compared to 1996."

"The prices of vegetables, for example, grew by 100 per cent during the previous eight months," he said. "Wholesale merchants were taking advantage of this increase while farmers are not gaining anything," Dr. Obeidat said. "And the consumer is the most affected by this monopoly."

According to figures released by the Central Bank of Jordan, the cost of living in the first 10 months of 1997 — measured by a basket of goods including rent, food and other items — rose by 5.4 per cent. It soared to 122.9 points from 116.6 points during the same period a year earlier.

Officials and consumers attribute the increase in the cost of living, including food and grains, to soaring prices on the international market. Around 90 per cent of Jordan's total food needs are imported.

International inflation rates were expected to produce an increase of up to four per cent in the prices of import-

ed commodities on the local market. But prices have gone higher, partly because of consumer abuse by merchants.

"Any rise or decline in the prices of goods in the world market is usually accompanied by a drop or rise in local prices," Dr. Obeidat said. "But local merchants immediately raise the prices of goods by 30 to 40 per cent even if their prices went down in the world market."

Dr. Obeidat said transitional changes affecting the economy helped push up the cost of living.

"The cost of living is rising because it is a developing economy. And this trend will continue," he asserted.

He said certain laws and mechanisms were needed to protect consumers and prevent monopoly by merchants. "Unfortunately, we do not have such laws to safeguard our consumers," said Dr. Obeidat.

He said the society was trying hard to create links between consumers, mer-

chants, manufacturers and the government to redress the situation.

The society's legal committee had revised a draft consumer protection law that will be submitted to Parliament and the government soon.

"We urge them to take action," he emphasised.

Local reports said the prices of most goods went up by 21 per cent during the week prior to the start of the fasting month of Ramadan, which began on Dec. 29.

During the month of Ramadan, many people host iftar banquets displaying many items. Many hoard food, increasing demand and pushing up prices before they level off.

"The consumer has a negative consumption pattern because he buys large amounts during the first week, but during the second week he tends to buy less," Dr. Obeidat said.

"The consumer needs time to grasp such matters," he concluded.

Egypt to privatise utilities as reforms progress

CAIRO (R) — Egypt plans to privatise its utilities as part of its economic reform programme in a bid to attract fresh investment and modernise the sector, the minister in charge of privatisation said.

"Utilities are the future for privatisation so it's logical to think of the agencies that own and operate this sector," Public Enterprise Minister Atef Obeid told reporters.

"This is the challenging part and we hope to continue investments to modernise the infrastructure," he said.

Mr. Obeid, who likes to call himself the government's salesman, said the state had decided to start with the telecommunications authority Egypt Telecom and will offer tranches to private investors as early as this year.

Electricity and other energy organisations will follow, he added.

The state has also offered private investors a licence to build a second cellular telephone network and has plans to transform the existing system into a private company.

Private investors are already involved in strategic areas like energy, power and transport.

They are taking part through build-own-operate-and-transfer schemes — in projects ranging from natural gas grids and airports to electricity and water desalination plants and highways.

Mr. Obeid said the state, encouraged by its success in privatising some of its firms through the bourse, was now gravitating towards selling even more companies to strategic investors who would pull them out of the red.

"We can't afford not to have modern and efficient

infrastructure and industry. This is where the private sector comes in," he said.

Officials say privatisation is the best way for the government to upgrade an infrastructure groaning under the weight of the country's population of more than 60 million people. The population is growing at about 2.1 per cent a year.

The sell-off plans also satisfy the conditions of a structural reform programme which Egypt, backed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, has been implementing since the early 1990s.

The reforms have given Egypt's economy a solid reputation as an emerging market which has attracted billions of dollars in foreign investment. It is aimed at wresting the economy out of state control.

Mauro Mecagni, the IMF representative in Cairo, hailed Mr. Obeid's plans as "steps along the right road."

"The government's commitment to reforms is a very positive signal. Privatising utilities was a dream a few years ago and is still a dream for other countries," he said.

"We consider this move, the move to approach strategic investors and to bring the private sector into the shipping sector, as a big step towards modernising the economy."

Mr. Obeid said that the state had so far privatised 82 of the total 314 firms it owns for a total of about eight billion pounds (\$2.36 billion).

For 1998, he said it was preparing to privatise 25 firms through the stock exchange and offer 31 to strategic investors. The state also aims to sell some hotels.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's time to start that project you've been dreaming of, but you'll have to make a mess before you can put things right. You don't want to start into this all by yourself. Actually, the more the merrier. If you get all your friends to help, you can have a party while you're at it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Put a down payment on that cruise to Hawaii next summer and you'll have motivation to save all the way through winter. You'll have something huge to save for, which you always like. The more outrageous your objective, the more likely you are to get excited about it.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good day to go over the budget. Do you know how much upcoming expenses will total? How much do you have saved for emergencies? Get a Capricorn or Cancer friend to help, if you need it. They find it easier to discuss finances than you do.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Expect a hassle from your partner late today, but don't worry. This person might have a better idea. Your idea was more of an instigator to get the other person going. You might even do this on purpose. Propose something so outlandish that your friend will have to get involved just to keep you from doing something foolish.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A group activity this morning will not only be fun, but will bring you and your partner closer together. Later, you'll be working on a household project. Romance is usually associated with wine and roses. Today, it's more likely to be found with a hammer and nails nearby. Build something together, and your relationship will flourish.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) The one morning you can sleep late, and somebody thinks of something for you to do. Well, it'll probably turn out for the best. Later today, you'll have an opportunity to gather with friends. Let them know about plans you and a loved one are making. They'll have different perspectives, and give you valuable coaching.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Finish paperwork early. Later on, an older person will have other plans for you. How long since you've gone to visit your mom? Give her your attention and comply with her requests. There's a reason we honour our mothers, and you'll find out what it is this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a good weekend to travel. Unfortunately, your sweetheart may have other plans. Don't worry too much about it. It would be OK for you two to go different routes during the middle of the day. You could get back together this evening and compare notes. That would give you something interesting to talk about.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're exceptionally intelligent first thing this morning. That's the best time to talk someone into doing what you want. Your logic will be flawless. That won't be as true later today. You're apt to run into a difference of opinion this afternoon. Don't worry. Mental battles like these keep your wits sharp.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The morning is a flurry of activity. You're looking at more options than you can fit into your schedule. By afternoon, you may also get a few invitations to go away this weekend. Your mate may be against the idea initially, but should warm up to it later. Give him or her something special to sweeten the deal.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Make decisions this morning with your significant other on something you tow have been talking about. Your paths may go in different directions later, but try to get together by dinnertime. The tension is actually good for the relationship. If you look at it as something you're working through together, it'll be bonding.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Don't take a hassle with a roommate too seriously this morning. This afternoon, you'll have time to relax. Since you've got the day off, might as well enjoy it. Do the most restful thing you can think of, with the most supportive, nurturing friend you have. If this turns out to be a Labrador retriever, so be it.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Israel's '97 budget deficit well below forecasts

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel's 1997 budget deficit was far below forecasts, notably due to the sale of several state enterprises, the finance ministry has announced.

The deficit stood at \$2.28 billion, or 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), while government forecasts at

the start of the year were for a deficit of \$2.53 billion dollars, or 2.8 per cent of GDP.

The privatisation programme launched by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu included the sale of the country's biggest bank, Hapoalim, and part of the state telecommunications firm Bezeq.

The finance ministry also said the deficit was held down in part by a general economic slowdown and low level of inflation which helped rein in public spending.

Mr. Netanyahu last week passed a controversial austerity budget through parliament calling for \$600 million in spending cuts compared to 1997 in order to keep the deficit down to 2.4 per cent of GDP. The \$59 billion budget was only approved Monday after weeks of wrangling with coalition parties over proposed spending cuts and the resignation of Foreign Minister David Levy.

Mr. Levy objected to deep cuts Mr. Netanyahu ordered in welfare spending and aid to disadvantaged areas, ostensibly to reach his deficit target.

Mr. Netanyahu ultimately restored some of the funding, but failed to convince Levy to withdraw his resignation.

Meanwhile, the value of applications for research and development aid from Israel's Office of the Chief Scientist was up 27 per cent in the first 11 months of last year to \$1.17 billion, chief scientist Omer Berli said.

She said applications in November alone reached a monthly record of \$99.5 million, four times the level of a year earlier. In the first 11 months, she added, her office approved requests totalling \$970 million.

She warned, however, that her office faced a budget deficit of more than 600 million shekels because of the rise in applications and the reduction in its budget.

The Office of the Chief Scientist runs one of the Israeli government's main programmes for subsidising research and development. Recipients are required to repay the grant through royalties from the sales of commercially successful products developed with the aid.

Ms. Berli said royalties paid to the chief scientist rose 30 per cent in the 11 months to \$989.9 million.

She said applications for aid had fallen nine per cent in 1997, mainly from start-up companies. Ms. Berli attributed the decline to restrictions on transferring to overseas know-how developed with government aid.

With increasing numbers of Israeli companies entering strategic partnerships or merging with overseas companies, managers are loathe to accept the restrictions, she said.

Tunisia phosphoric acid exports rise 22%

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia's state-run Groupe Chimique's exports of phosphoric acid during the first nine months of 1997 were 538,700 tonnes, up 22 per cent from 442,300 tonnes in the same period last year, official figures showed.

Exports of diammonium phosphate (DAP) were 504,000 tonnes, down from 614,000 tonnes.

Sales of phosphoric acid to India, Tunisia's main client, rose by 33 per cent to 314,700 tonnes from 236,000 tonnes.

Phosphoric acid exports to France fell to 49,100 tonnes from 52,900 tonnes and those to Italy to 31,900 tonnes from 39,300 tonnes.

Groupe Chimique has six plants in four production centres in southern Tunisia. Ninety per cent of its phosphates by-products are exported.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

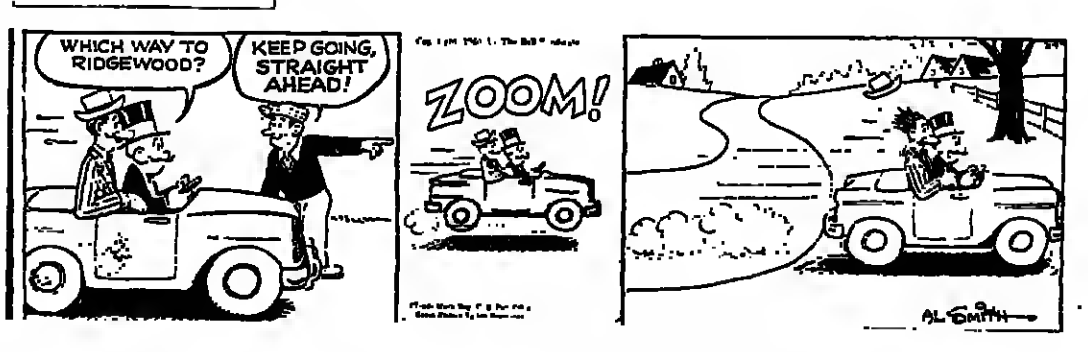
1 Outcast
2 Cul-de-sacs
3 Brooks Shields' favorite tennis player
4 Shout from the pews
5 Heep and others
6 Someone on the bridge
7 Jay, the comic
8 Local trees
9 Pit
10 London gardens
11 Long, narrow inlet
12 Conger's catch
13 Spoken imitations
14 Mazda model
15 Whirlpool
16 Sieged
17 Gantling word
18 Way out
19 Hit with a switch
20 "Hud" star
21 Greenery
22 Riddick, the heavyweight boxer
23 Gannet goose
24 Work units
25 First of a count
26 Org.
27 Pre-World Series abbr.
28 News bit
29 Throat prob.
30 "Those the Days"
31 Wishing
32 Even sillier
33 Ending follower
34 Admonition
35 Gets the fire going again
36 Bottomless pits

DOWN
1 Swiss abstract artist
2 In accord
3 Slickers, rubbers, etc.
4 Japanese golfer Akio

5 Spent wood
6 Snake speech
7 Veronica Lake movie, "The Blue"
8 Take up
9 breve
10 Not dese or
11 "Born Free" lioness
12 Made insensitive
13 Touch-toned?
14 In a rational way
15 Crocus, for example
16 Play part
17 Flat-top hills
18 Home run number one
19 Singer Gorme
20 Either part of a fly?
21 Our sun
22 Love and others
23 Fountain drink
24 Cakes end pies

41 Missed the neighbor
42 Go up against
43 Kin of a furnace
44 Recorded
45 Bad beetle
47 Michaels and Greene
53 Niger's
54 Soft ashale
55 Printer's measure
56 Undulating
58 Dress, old-style
60 Collar like a coop

Peanuts



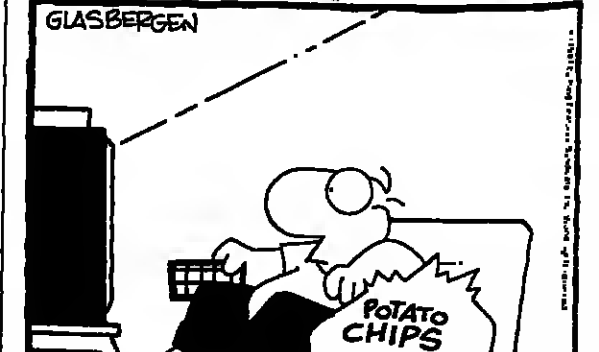
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NEFIT
GARBE
DRUTSY
INGRYP

Print answer here: _____

Saturday's Jumbles: GRIEF AFIRE BUNION VERBAL
Answer: When the king tamed the wild horse he proved that he was — THE "REINING" RULER

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Committee to restructure legal framework, operations of 80 provident funds

**** THE COUNCIL** of Ministers has entrusted a committee from the Central Bank of Jordan with the task of restructuring 80 provident funds that manage a total of JD250 million for 150,000 members in addition to the Social Security Corporation which has a JD950 million portfolio. The committee will put the legislative and legal framework to specify an operational mechanism for these funds and the means to develop them.

In addition, the committee will work on rectifying the performance of the funds, expanding the role of the private sector in retirement issues, eliminating the misuse of funds and ensuring the independency of the funds by distancing the management of the funds from the operations of the funds. Forming a board of directors and a supervisory commission will also be among the tasks of the committee which will endeavour to merge some funds and diversify their investments as well.

According to Committee President Mohammad Said Shahin, provident funds do not have investment diversification at present. He indicated that most of these funds have their investments in one type, namely deposits in banks for low interest. "The law requires diversification in long-term investment instruments such as shares and bonds and discourages using the money for consumption purposes except for limited amounts," Mr. Shahin said.

According to a study conducted recently, the largest portion of provident funds were found to belong to various companies as they totalled 60 provident funds valued at JD145 million for 48,000 members. In second place came the provident funds of professional associations which, although few in number, they carried a value of JD77.5 million for 94,000 members.

Public sector provident funds are two kinds: (1) Four provident funds for universities and (2) six provident funds for semi-government independent entities such as the Social Security Corporation, the Central Bank of Jordan and the Royal Jordanian. These funds have a total value of about JD27 million and benefit 8,000 members.

As such, the assets of the provident funds account for 4.85 per cent of the gross domestic product with a total number of 150,000 members who account for 4.6 per cent of the overall workforce in Jordan (AI Ra'i).

Jordan Gulf Insurance Company denies personal interests, disputes or intention to merge

**** A CLARIFICATION** received from the Jordan Gulf Insurance Company points out that the general assembly of the firm has not approved any proposal for merger with any party. The clarification states that the latest extraordinary meeting called did not convene because of lack of quorum. The company stressed that neither personal interests nor disputes were behind the course of events which were reported in the Jordan Times last Monday, Jan. 5/98 (AI Ra'i).

New board elected to save scandal-ridden Lebanese airline

BEIRUT (AFP) — A new board for Lebanese flag carrier Middle East Airlines was elected Friday to turn around the ailing finances of the company, which is also facing a judicial probe into the leasing of aircraft from Singapore Airlines.

The seven-member board is to be headed by Mohammad Hout, director of the real-estate department at the Central Bank of Lebanon which owns 99.7 per cent of the shares in the airline. MEA sources told AFP.

The new board includes businessmen, engineers and lawyers as well as Frenchman Christian Blanc, a former president of Air France, they said.

Blanc succeeded in moving Air France out of the red and into profit between 1993 and 1997 when he resigned after the French socialist government refused to privatise the airline.

The Central Bank of Lebanon invited Blanc to Beirut a month ago and appointed him as a technical consultant to draw up a plan to solve MEA's financial problems.

The new board, elected during a general assembly meeting, replaced the outgoing 11-man board which resigned Dec. 17 after the launch of an inquiry into

alleged financial improprieties at the airline.

At the central bank's request, the judicial authorities are still looking into a lease contract signed by former MEA chairman Khaled Salam in June to lease three Airbus aircraft for MEA from Singapore Airlines.

They are investigating allegations that an illegal commission was paid on the S39-million, five-year lease.

The authorities are also examining allegations that the aircraft were overpaid for by \$500 per flying hour, or roughly \$15 million for the three aircraft over the five-year lease period.

The central bank on Dec. 21 negotiated a new deal with Singapore Airlines for the leasing of the three aircraft.

The agreement, signed in London, provided for a gradual reduction in lease costs over five years which will result in a total saving of around \$5 million for MEA. The agreement also gives MEA the right to buy the three Airbus aircraft.

The affair is a major blow to MEA at a time when it is having difficulty overcoming the effects of the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war during which it suffered huge losses because of the repeated closure of Beirut airport.

United Company for Financial Investments raises capital to JD2m, brings in foreign strategic shareholder



Mohammad Al Amad

AMMAN (J.T.) — The general assembly of the United Company for Financial Investments (UCFI) has unanimously agreed to raise the company's capital from JD1.5 million to JD2 million.

The general assembly entrusted the company's board of directors to finalise procedures to achieve that goal through offering shares for private subscription, a process which will be implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply and the Jordan Securities Commission.

The announcement was made following a general assembly meeting chaired by the company's board chairman, Mohammad Al Amad, and attended by Jordan Bank Chairman Abdul Karim Kabari and other officials of the bank representing the bank's savings fund and a representative of the Strategic Company for Investments and a number of shareholders.

The Jordan Kuwait Bank and the bank's savings fund and the Strategic Company for Investments have together provided the rest of the

required capital by taking 450,000 shares.

With the latest move, the Jordan Kuwait Bank now holds an equity of 30 per cent of the company's capital.

During the general assembly meeting, Mr. Naser Al Amad, the general manager of UCFI, presented a summary of the company's activities in 1997, noting that the total volume of trading for the account of clients amounted to JD86.9 million.

He also noted that the UCFI has ranked second in terms of the volume of trading among the 28 brokers at the Amman Financial Market.

Mr. Mohammad Al Amad pointed out that the reason behind increasing the company's capital was to bring in a strategic foreign shareholder into the company in addition to the Jordan Kuwait bank. He said this is an essential step for providing financial services which are directly connected with financial markets, adding that the step is bound to place the company among the major firms operating in the Amman Financial Market.

Attending the general assembly meeting were shareholders who held 1.34 million shares out of the total company's shares of 1.5 million or 89 per cent.

The UCFI was established in 1983 as a company with limited responsibility and in 1995 it was transformed into a public shareholding company and was registered with a JD1.5 million capital.

The company eventually was approved by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply's companies controller in 1996 with a JD 1.5 million paid up capital.

REUTERS • REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 10/01/98 20:12									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6226	0.6200	1.4767	132.10	1.4288	1791.00	2.0638	6.0886
DE Mark	0.5487	1.0000	0.3400	0.8102	72.46	0.7842	982.28	1.1268	3.3467
GB Sterling	1.6129	2.5577	1.0000	2.3943	163.32	2.3660	2888.53	3.5124	9.8367
CH Franc	0.6772	1.2334	0.4195	1.0000	88.42	0.9676	1212.02	1.4884	4.1279
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3792	0.4890	1.1174	1.0000	13.55	156.41	2.1448	6.4148
CA Dollar	0.6894	1.2632	0.4258	1.0260	1.08	1.0000	1244.05	1.4232	4.2271
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0174	0.3460	0.9824	1357.59	0.7881	1.0000	11.46	3.4041
NL Guilder	0.4089	88.72	0.3017	71.90	54.27	0.6960	871.79	1.0000	2.9686
FR Franc	0.1640	0.2388	0.1016	0.2405	21.64	0.2344	33.67	33.8700	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7508	0.3770	3.6408	0.3058	3.6727	1527.00	3.4040
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	6.2903	0.5317	5.1361	0.4313	5.1801	2153.74	4.8011
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1090	1.0000	0.1000	0.97	0.0815	0.98	407.11	0.9075
Bahraini Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9491	1.0000	9.66	0.8111	9.74	4050.40	9.0292
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1647	1.0302	1.0000	1.01	0.8111	1.01	419.41	0.9350
Kuwait Dinar	3.2701	2.3185	12.2655	1.2328	11.91	12.01	4983.45	0.9350	1.0000
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0213	1.0126	0.9913	0.8833	1.00	416.77	0.8268
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4643	2.4563	0.2468	2.3843	0.2003	2.4052	1.0000	2.2292
Egyptian	0.2538	0.2083	1.1019	0.1108	1.0696	0.0899	1.0789	448.59	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last	Previous	Oil
Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI	15.39	15.66	Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI
W. Texas	15.62	15.98	Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI	15.39	15.66	Brent
Bonny	15.38	15.66	WTI	15.39	15.66	Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI
Dubai	13.96	13.97	Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI	15.39	15.66	Brent
UL Gas	166.00	164.30	WTI	15.39	15.66	Brent	15.39	15.66	WTI

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency	Buy	Sell	Currency
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	DE Mark	1.1411	1.1468	JP Yen	0.0076	0.0077	IT Lira
GB Sterling	0.388	0.3899	CH Franc	0.4788	0.4812	NL Guilder	0.3443	0.346	FR Franc
JP Yen	0.1159	0.1165	CA Dollar	0.6894	0.6918	IT Lira	0.3948	0.3968	FR Franc

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Period	1-M	3-M	6-M	9-M	1-Y	Period	1-M	3-M	6-M
USD	5.48	5.50	5.53	5.57	5.58	GBP	7.34	7.44	7.31
GBP	7.34	7.44	7.31	7.31	7.31	JPY	0.31	0.31	0.31
JPY	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	DEM	3.58	3.59	3.58
DEM	3.58	3.59	3.58	3.58	3.58	FRF	3.58	3.59	3.57
FRF	3.58	3.59	3.57	3.57	3.57	CHF	0.93	1.12	1.26
CHF	0.93	1.12	1.26	1.39	1.48	ITL	6.04	5.85	5.64

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls	Bourse	Index
New York	DOW JONES	7580.42	-222.2	-2.85	7800.13	7627.36	7802.62	New York	S&P 500
New York	S&P 500	827.69	-26.36	-2.97	856.05	821.72	856.05	London	FT-SE 100
London	FT-SE 100	6138.3	-88.8	-1.48	6230.1	6125.4	6231.1	Tokyo	NIKKEI 225
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	14985.1	-24.08	-0.16	15056.5	14724.3	15018.2	Paris	CAC 40
Paris	CAC 40	2919.81	-35.13	-1.19	2941.58	2902.13	2954.94	Frankfurt	DAX
Frankfurt	DAX	4236.94	-110.29	-2.54	4288.99	4230.91	4347.23		

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKH SAUD TELEPHONE: 60711 / 607179 ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 10/01/1998														
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH LOW		COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE				
N	348,000 250,000	ARAB BANK	14.9	1.23	7	440	142440	324.00	324.00	-				
N	1,340 1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	15	4590	8399	1.81	1.83	+0.02				
S	1,300 890	MID. EAST. INV. BK.	72.9	0.00	1	100	111	1.17	1.11	-0.06				
S	2,680 1,650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	6.14	8	6750	11475	1.70	1.70	-				
S	5,100 4,610	THE HOUSING BK.	15.7	1.69	7	1875	9821	5.25	5.25	-				
S	4,180 1,850	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	10.7	0.00	10	1085	4169	2.03	2.00	-0.03				
S	980 620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.29	11	6650	4458	0.66	0.68	+0.02				
S	4,190 2,920	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	21.3	0.00	1	10000	29500	2.96	2.96	-				
S	4,050 2,240	JOR. FINANCIAL BANK	22.0	0.00	12	3099	1222	2.30	2.30	-				
S	3,900 2,300	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	14.8	0.00	5	31111	71555	2.30	2.30	-				
N	2,350 2,250	JOR. INV. FID. BANK/NEW	8.0	0.00	3	15555	35777	2.25	2.30	+0.05				
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 231.66 %CHG: +0.10 80 82255 325047														
	2,050 1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.18	1	250	483	1.93	1.93	-				
	8,800 7,500	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	12.0	1.32	1	200	1672	8.80	8.36	-0.44				
	6,100 3,550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	15.0	4.09	2	200	983	4.94	4.89	-0.05				
	1,550 930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1100	1155	1.04	1.05	+0.01				
	1,550 410	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	23.1	0.00	1	250	108	0.41	0.43	+0.02				
	1,590 1,150	MID. EAST. HOTELS	18.6	0.00	1	600	732	1.25	1.22	-0.03				
	4,000 2,690	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.2	0.00	2	1250	4900	3.90	3.90	-				
	2,190 1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.51	2	400	1659	1.69	1.69	-				
	1,880 1,640	UNION LAMCO DEV.	9	0.00	2	3100	2170	0.71	0.70	-0.01				
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.62 %CHG: -0.34 16 7350 12878														
	1,160 930	ATTANJEER	9	0.00	1	400	464	1.16	1.16	-				
	4,450 2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.5	3.61	13	3539	10762	3.04	3.05	+0.01				
	7,050 5,580	ARAB PETROL. REFIN.	14.2	3.28	1	450	2824	6.00	5.83	-0.17				
	11,160 9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.1	8.51	8	301	3146	10.47	10.45	-0.02				
	4,700 3,440	ARAB PHARM. PVT.	12.0	4.59	73	30650	132622	4.28	4.36	+0.08				
	6,000 4,400	DAR ALADNAN INV. INV.	12.4	4.42	4	14556	82067	5.62	5.55	-0.07				
	3,650 2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.6	10.42	5	1050	2520	2.40	2.40	-				
	630 440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	6	1073	487	0.45	0.46	+0.01				
	710 510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	2	6000	3540	0.59	0.59	-				
	1,140 370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	11	6250	2609	0.40	0.42	+0.02				
	820 530	JOR. SULPHUR-CHEN	9	0.00	4	1700	1001	0.69	0.59	-				
	1,610 1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.7	5.69	14	2513	3081	1.17	1.23	+0.06				
	820 820	UNIV. HOUS. INDUS.	24	2.27	300	34850	10700	8.89	8.89	-				
S	1,410 690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9.8	13.70	19	9500	6915	0.71	0.73	+0.02				
	960 810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	11	23100	21000	0.90	0.90	-				
	1,300 1,080	INTL. TUBING CO.	6.4	0.00	10	9750	1170	1.20	1.20	-				
	1,200 860	UNION CH. & VEG.	46.8	0.00	10	41850	42717	1.02	1.03	+0.01				
	810 710	JORDAN STEEL	33.5	6.76	3	550	403	0.72	0.74	+0.02				
	840 570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	26.33	23	23000	14262	0.62	0.62	-				
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 112.54 %CHG: -1.02 245 210752 372617														
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.37 %CHG: -0.33 341 300357 710541														
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 10/01/1998														
	530 300	CENTRAL CEN. STORAGE	0	0.00	1	3000	990	0.32	0.33	+0.01				
	1610 340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.6	0.00	10	39750	14310	0.36	0.36	-				
	1,450 1,060	ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	81.3	0.00	8	1000	1240	1.30	1.24	-0.06				
	800 660	UNION INVEST.	8	0.00	24	2450	4910	0.70	0.70	-				
	570 360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	34	76250	37575	0.80	0.80	-				
	780 610	AL-DHAWLAN 75%	67.2	0.00	1	100000	45000	0.71	0.70	-0.01				
	530 280	JOR. INTL. INV. TRD.	31.4	0.00	2	1610	1167	0.28	0.28	-				
	750 380	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAMICO	9	0.00	12	29250	16040	0.88	0.88	-				
	730 550	RASI PHARM.	8	0.00	3	1611	1127	0.71	0.70	-0.01				
	470 240	INDUS. ENG.	0	0.00	23	119200	33331	0.27	0.28	+0.01				
NH	950 900	ADVANCED PHARMA. IND.	8	0.00	1	50	43	0.90	0.85	-0.05				
	820 490	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	4	850	459	0.54	0.54	-				
NH	1,000 1,000	OPTICALS HEARING 75%	70	0.00	70	100	70	1.00	1.00	-				
NH	1,000 660	NAT. ALUMINIUM 75%	93.2	0.00	2	250	105	0.67	0.67	-				
NH	1,100 720	ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT.	46.2	0.00	5	11900	11894	0.99	1.00	+0.01				
NH	1,110 1,000	NUTRITION 75%	8	0.00	29	29224	26886	1.11	1.17	+0.06				
GRAND TOTAL 134 437735 192197														
I : New 12 months high N : New 12 months low S : Stock dividend during the past 12 months N : Listed during the past 12 months P : P/E ratio is 100 or more + : Negative P/E - : Rating is zero or N/A for the most recent year														

FINA moves to keep up with drug cheats

PERTH (AFP) — In the wake of damaging drug controversies in the run-up to the world swimming championship here, world body FINA Saturday announced the formation of a task force to help combat drug cheats.

Chinese swimmer Yuan Yuan and her coach Zhou Zhewen face four-year suspensions from the sport for their part in bringing banned human growth hormone drugs into Australia on Thursday.

Earlier in the week German head coach Winfried Leopold had his accreditation to the championship revoked after his admission here of a knowledge of the drugs regime in the former East Germany.

A Supreme Court judge here later forced FINA to return the pass to Leopold on its rules infringements, although the matter is still before FINA's doping panel.

FINA secretary Gunnar Werner said the world swimming federation had decided immediately to establish the task force of scientific, medical and forensic experts to devise ways of combatting the insidious drug problem.

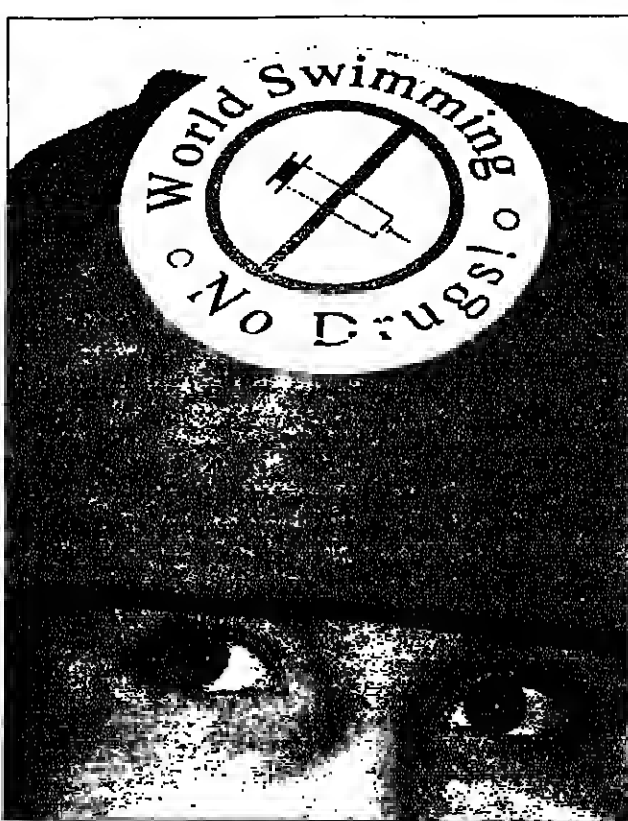
The yet-to-be-decided number of experts will report back to FINA within six months of their appointment with recommenda-

tions on how to deal with the drug issues.

Werner said the task force will examine and provide recommendations on improving the coordination of research; the development and improvement of coordination and consistency of national and international policies; the transport and trafficking of substances and the identifying of problems such as the inability of detecting certain substances and potential problems with future performance enhancing drugs.

He said in answer to a question at a press conference that the task force will consider ways of possibly implementing blood tests on swimmers to counter the proliferation of the new phase of growth hormone drugs.

Werner said the task force would help FINA uncover those unwanted substances that the other major laboratories, linked to the International Olympic Committee and its medical commission, had been unable to detect.



U.S. swimmer Jenny Thompson wears a badge on her hat showing her opinion of drugs in sport at a news conference at the 8th World Swimming Championships in Perth January 10. Thompson said it was not fair to compete against athletes using performance enhancing drugs, though the recent controversy with the Chinese team would not affect the preparation of the U.S. team for next week's competition (Reuters photo)

Hormones enough for all Chinese team — U.S. coach

PERTH (AFP) — The human growth hormones uncovered in the baggage of Chinese swimmer Yuan Yuan this week were enough to use for the entire Chinese team at the world championship here.

U.S. coach Jon Urbanchek said Saturday. Australian Customs confirmed Friday that the substance found in Yuan's baggage at Sydney Airport on Thursday was a prohibited human growth hormone.

Her coach Zhou Zhewen admitted to a customs official that he had packed the 13 vials of somatropin into Yuan's baggage to pass on to someone in Australia.

Yuan and Zhou have been expelled from the championship by the Chinese delegation and face minimum four-year bans from the sport for trafficking in the hor-

mones. Their fate is expected to be known possibly later Saturday when FINA's doping panel reach their conclusions from an inquiry.

Urbanchek, the head men's coach of the U.S. team, said he had been informed by the American head of the world swimming federation's medical commission that the 13 vials found in Yuan's possession could be enough to administer to the whole 23-member Chinese contingent at the championship.

"Dr. Allen Richardson told me the amount seized was good enough for the entire Chinese team for the duration of this competition," Urbanchek said.

"I'm not sure what the purpose of it was, but it definitely wasn't the reason they gave," Urbanchek told reporters

after a press conference.

"The party line was that a coach made a mistake and brought it out for a friend in Canberra, but I think it's a party line and my name is Mao Zedong."

"I think the turtle soup they were going to cook here is going to taste a little bit different, the main ingredient is missing."

Urbanchek said he did not believe the entire Chinese team should be sent packing from Perth. "I don't think FINA has the authority to throw anybody out. I think it should be up to every country to police themselves."

Fukuoka gets 2001 World Swimming Championships

PERTH (AFP) — The Japanese city of Fukuoka was Saturday announced as the venue for the ninth World Swimming Championships in 2001, world body FINA said.

Fukuoka, which hosted last year's Pan Pacific Games in August, beat the bid by the 1992 Spanish Olympic city of Barcelona for the right to stage the champi-

onships. Besides swimming, they also include diving, water polo and synchronised swimming.

The previous world championships were held in Belgrade in 1973, Cali (1975), West Berlin (1978), Guayaquil (1982), Madrid (1986), Perth (1991), Rome (1994).

Fukuoka will be the first time the championship has been held in Asia.

Success for Dolan is a breath of fresh air

PERTH (AFP) — Asthma-sufferer Tom Dolan said Saturday he is thriving in the healthy Perth air as he builds up to the defence of his world 400-metre medley crown at the championships here.

Dolan, the world record holder from the last world championship in Rome four years ago, is one of the Americans big guns for the championship on Tuesday.

Dolan, who is also the reigning Olympic champion having won the event at Atlanta in 1996, has left nothing to chance in preparing for the world meet.

"I was here a year ago with the University of Michigan team training actually in this pool which I feel is a great advantage and I was able to see how the air was and how I dealt with it," Dolan told a press conference Saturday.

"I had a great three weeks' of training here and loved it and that's been one of the things that's helped me a lot in training for this meet."

"I have the positive feeling that I was here last year, the air was great and I trained great and so in the back of my mind I know I've been there before and had success in terms of having great air before, that's helped me a lot."

Dolan said he had a disappointing northern summer after the Pan Pacific Games in Japan.

"I had some health problems, but it worked to my advantage because I didn't really take a break at all and trained all through August to November and started to taper."

"It's something we're not used to, swimming real fast and shaving in January, but a big meet is a big meet, and no matter what month you put it in or what hemisphere or pool you put it, we're going to be ready to swim fast in races."

"I was focused on this meet for a long time since the (Atlanta) Olympics."

"I knew when it was going to be and I knew that it was something I had to do and I am feeling good and we are all ready to race, no matter what time of year it is."

Dolan, whose world record is four minutes 12.30 seconds, goes into Tuesday's races ranked fourth in the world on 1997 times behind Dutchman Marcel Wouda, Australian Matthew Dunn and Canadian Curtis Myden.



Gold-winning Yu Zhuochong (C) of China holds his medal for the World Swimming Championships men's one-metre springboard diving event in Perth January 10. Troy Dumais of the United States (L) won the silver and Germany's Holger Schiepp won the bronze (Reuters photo)



Greece's Theodoros Kalakonas (L) looks for support as Spain's Sergi Pedrol attempts to block during their men's preliminary round water polo match at the 8th World Swimming Championships in Perth. Spain defeated Greece 7-6 (Reuters photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Allou joins Nagoya Grampus Eight

PARIS (AFP) — Paris Saint Germain midfielder Bernard Allou on Friday said he had signed a two-year contract with Japanese club Nagoya Grampus Eight. The 22-year-old is set to travel to Japan at the end of the month with the Japanese league starting at the end of February. Allou said he chose Nagoya before French division one club Chateauroux because they offered him a two-year contract. The transfer fee was also believed to be between six and nine million francs (\$1m to 1.5m).

Schulz to face Welch for European title

LONDON (AFP) — Germany's Axel Schulz will face Britain's Scott Welch for the vacant European heavyweight boxing title in Berlin or Hamburg on February 28. The pair will fight for the title vacated by Croatia's Zeljko Mavrovic, who is aiming for a world title shot. Promoter Frank Warren said Friday that the winner between Schulz and Welch could fight WBO champion Herbie Hide later in the year. Schulz has a 24-3-1 record, while Welch is 21-3 and lost to then WBO champion Henry Akinwande 12 months ago.

Real Madrid's Fabri put on loan

MADRID (AFP) — Brazil's Rodrigo Fabri, Real Madrid's new young recruit, has been loaned out to Flamengo till 1999 to give him time to develop as a player. The club announced the 21-year-old was a future bet for Real and would be a better player on his return from the Brazilian club. However Rodrigo, who wanted to play for the Spanish champions straight away, looked on the bright side of his disappointment. Rodrigo said it had been easy to agree to going to Flamengo because he would be close to his family. "I am now linked to two great football clubs and Flamengo will be

a good shop window for me." Rodrigo is hoping good performances may seem him drafted into Brazil's World Cup squad.

'Gretzky top NHL player of all-time'

NEW YORK (AFP) — New York Rangers center Wayne Gretzky, who holds virtually every offensive record in the National Hockey League, was named the top NHL player in history by The Hockey News on Friday. Gretzky led the field in the publication's list of the top 50 players of all-time. The 36-year-old Gretzky, currently in his 19th NHL season, has 874 goals and 1,873 assists for 2,747 points. He also holds, among his litany of records, single-season bests for goals (92), assists (163) and points (215), all set with the Edmonton Oilers. Earlier this season, Gretzky became the first player in league history to record more assists than any other player had points. Gordie Howe, who placed third on the list behind legendary Boston Bruins defenseman Bobby Orr, totalled 1,850 points over a remarkable 26-year career with the Detroit Red Wings and Hartford Whalers.

Rain washes out Doha quarters

DOHA (AFP) — Heavy rain washed out Friday's quarter-finals of the \$1 million Qatar Open ATP event here and organisers announced they would be switched to Saturday. The line-up is Britain's top seed Greg Rusedski versus France's Fabrice Santoro. Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic against Germany's Bernd Karbacher. Petr Korda of the Czech Republic versus Britain's Tim Henman and Ukrainian Andrei Medvedev against Dutchman Sjeng Schalken. The quarter-finals will go ahead during the day with the semi-finals in the evening. The final will be played Sunday as scheduled.

Mitsubishi dominates Paris-Dakar Rally

PARIS (AFP) — France's Jean-Pierre Fontenay led the 20th Paris-Dakar Rally following Friday's ninth stage with Mitsubishi holding the first four places in the car section.

The Buggy of Germany's Jutta Kleinschmidt, third overnight, had problems in the Sahara desert and dropped out of the leading five.

After 44km of this 478km stage from El Mreït in Mauritania to Taoudenni in Mali, Kleinschmidt broke down with a mechanical problem to help bring about Mitsubishi's domination.

Japan's Hiroshi Masuoka won the stage, despite being stuck in the sand for 30 minutes, and took third spot overall. France's Bruno Saby was in second position overall and Japan's Kenjiro Shinozuka was fourth following this tough stage.

Winter winds blew sand storms across the drivers' path making for an exhausting day as competitors got stuck in sand dunes.

SCOREBOARD

Hopman Cup

Slovak Republic bt France 2-1
Men's singles: Karol Kucera (SLO) bt Cedric Pioline (FRA) 7-6 (9/7), 6-4.
Women's singles: Mary Pierce (FRA) bt Karina Habsudova (SLO) 6-4, 7-5
Mixed doubles: Kucera/Habsudova (SLO) bt Pioline/Pierce (FRA) 6-3, 6-4.

Australian Men's Hardcourt Championships

Singles semi-finals:
Lleyton Hewitt (AUS) bt Andre Agassi (USA) 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-4).
Jason Stoltenberg (AUS) bt Todd Woodbridge (AUS) 6-4 6-1.
Doubles semi-final:
Ellis Ferreira (RSA x2)-Rick Leach (USA x2) bt Wayne Black (ZIM)-Andrew Kratzmann (AUS) 6-2 6-1.

NBA

Seattle	111	Boston	92
Atlanta	82	Washington	77
Detroit	101	Golden State	72
Minnesota	96	Portland	91
Chicago	90	New York	89
Miami	98	Denver	79
Charlotte	98	Vancouver	90
LA Lakers	125	LA Clippers	115
Phoenix	100	San Antonio	79

NHL

Washington	4	Philadelphia	1
New Jersey	4	Tampa Bay	1
Phoenix	4	Chicago	2
Dallas	3	Detroit	3 (OT)
Calgary	3	Florida	3 (OT)
Edmonton	5	Anaheim	1

Portuguese First Division

Salgueiros	1	FC Porto	3
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English League (Division One)

Tranmere	0	West Brom	0
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CINEMA	TEL: 634144		TEL: 634144		TEL: 699238		TEL: 677430		TEL: 079 33430		TEL: 079 33430		TEL: 625155	
	PHILADELPHIA "1"		PHILADELPHIA "2"		PLAZA		CONCORD		GALLERIA 2		GALLERIA 1		Bisham Yanes Theatre	
TODAY AT	George Clooney & Nicole Kidman ... in		Winona Rider & Anthe Bancroft ... in		SCREAM		Mel Gibson ... in CONSPIRACY THEORY		ABDOUN Demi Moore ... in THE JUROR		ABDOUN Jim Carie ... in THE CABLE GUY		NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE	
	THE PEACEMAKER		AMERICAN QUILT		AL MASEER (Arabic) Nour Al Sharif Shows: 8:30, 10:45		MURDER 1600 Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE Shows: 2:00, 6:30		Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas	
	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		HERCULES Shows: 2:00 p.m.		MR. BEAN Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30						For reservations call: 640155, 625155	

Agassi humbled by 16-year-old Aussie

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Andre Agassi was humbled Saturday by a 16-year-old Australian young gun who pulled off a major upset to beat the former world number one in the hardcourt championship semi-finals here.

It was a classic battle between a past champion and a future star that saw Lleyton Hewitt beat the American at his own game, with penetrating and powerful groundstrokes from the baseline to win 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-4).

By conquering Agassi in two tense tiebreak sets, the wild card entrant scored the biggest win of his career to set up an all Aussie final here Sunday against Jason Stoltenberg.

Agassi was no match for the consistency and sheer persistence of his inexperienced opponent who got everything back and ran every ball down.

Hewitt was understandably ecstatic with the win. "I don't think it's really sunk in yet. It feels good to make the finals of a tournament in my home town," he said.

Hewitt admitted he was a little overawed when he first went out on centre court but soon settled and went for his shots.

"At the start I was pretty nervous and he hits the ball like no-one else I have ever hit against so I just tried to match it with him from the baseline," The youngster was up 6-2 in the opening set tiebreak but Agassi came back with some strong first serves, including an ace and some solid groundstrokes to bring the score to 6-5.

Hewitt rallied, spurred by the cheers of the raucous Adelaide crowd, to hit a blistering backhand across court to clinch the first set.

Games went to serve in the second set, though Agassi sur-

vived a match point opportunity to Hewitt in the 12th game, forcing a second set tiebreak.

Hewitt again leapt to a 6-2 lead and won 7-4 after Agassi missed a forehand.

There were no breaks of serve in the match, though Agassi had numerous break point opportunities in both sets.

Agassi is preparing for the Australian Open later this month and attempting a comeback in the elite level of men's tennis after a dismal year in 1997. But he simply could not cope with Hewitt's numerous forehand passing shots and penetrating backhands when the pressure was on.

He confessed to taking Hewitt too lightly and paid the ultimate price.

"I should have given him more respect but was convinced he was going to go away," he said.

Despite triumphing, Hewitt still paid tribute to his boyhood idol.

"He is probably the cleanest hitter of the ball I have ever seen and probably the most talented person to ever pick up a racket," he said.

In the other semi-final Stoltenberg overpowered compatriot and fifth seed Todd Woodbridge 6-4 6-1 in an awesome display of strength and skill to march into the final.

Coming back from a four-month lay-off with a knee injury, Stoltenberg took just 53 minutes to dispose of his higher ranked opponent.

"Today I do not think Todd played great and he made a lot of errors but I served really well and played aggressively," he said.

Wihdat crowned Jordan's soccer champions for 4th consecutive year

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Wihdat were Saturday crowned Jordan's soccer champions for the 4th consecutive year as they clinched the Premier League Championship after beating Al Karmel 3-0 in the final match of the prestigious competition.

Al Wihdat ended the championship with 47 points in the overall standings with 15 wins 2 draws and only one defeat to former champions Al Faisali.

The match was a must-win for the titleholders as closest rivals Al Faisali had temporarily topped the standings with 46 points after an 8-2 win over Al Jazireh Friday.

Al Hussein finished third after a 2-1 win over Al Baqaa, while Al Ramtha, who needed a win in their relatively easy match

FINAL STANDINGS									
Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts		
Wihdat	18	15	2	1	36	5	47		
Faisali	18	15	1	2	59	15	46		
Hussein	18	8	4	6	30	26	28		
Ramtha	18	7	6	5	27	21	27		
Ahli	18	6	5	7	32	34	23		
Jazireh	18	7	2	9	24	34	22		
Qadissieb	18	6	4	8	22	26	22		
S.Hussein	18	5	4	9	22	29	19		
Baqaa	18	3	2	13	17	40	11		
Karmel	18	2	2	14	15	54	8		

against Shabab Al Hussein to maintain third place, could only manage an 0-0 draw and thus dropped to fourth.

Al Ahli moved up to fifth after a 2-2 draw with Al Qadissieb who went down to seventh.

Al Jazireh came in sixth after their loss to Al Faisali.

In the battle for a place in the Premier League in which eight teams maintain their position while the last

two are relegated, Al Baqaa and Al Karmel dropped to the second division and will be replaced by Al Arah and Kufroum next season.

Prior to the start of the final week of the tournament, Al Wihdat's officials seemed confident of winning the title and club chairman Bahjat Shihab confidently boasted: "The title is definitely ours until the year 2000."

The trophy was Al

Wihdat's second of the year after winning the Cup Winners Cup at the onset of the season. Al Faisali won the Federation Shield.

Al Wihdat are now eyeing the fourth and final title of the year — the Jordan Cup final — on Jan. 23.

The final will see Al Ramtha, who knocked out Al Faisali, playing the winner of Al Hussein-Al Wihdat semifinal set for

Jan. 16.

Bulls edge Knicks by 1 point; Hawks, Suns win

BOSTON (AP) — Vin Baker scored 22 points and the Seattle SuperSonics shot 61 per cent from the field to win their eighth straight game, 111-92 over the Boston Celtics on Friday night.

Seattle, which also has won eight straight on the road, improved its National Basketball Association-best record to 29-6. The Sonics scored the game's first five points, never trailed and led 64-44 at halftime.

Dale Ellis had 19 points and Gary Payton 18 for the Sonics.

Boston, which has lost three in a row, was led by Travis Knight with 21 points and 10 rebounds.

• Chicago Bulls 90, New York Knicks 89: At New York, Michael Jordan scored 44 points, topping 40 for the fourth time since Christmas, as the Chicago Bulls edged the New York Knicks.

With Scottie Pippen still recovering from foot surgery and Toni Kukoc sidelined by a respiratory infection, Jordan took up the slack for the Bulls by scoring nearly half their points.

New York had a shot at the winning basket after Allan Houston blocked Scott Burrell's corner jumper with 11 seconds left.

The Knicks got control of the ball with nine seconds left and Chris Childs dribbled the ball upcourt and took a 3-point shot that came up short.

Allan Houston led the Knicks with 19 points.

• Atlanta Hawks 82, Washington Wizards 77: At Atlanta, Steve Smith scored 22 points, including a key jumper with 18.7 seconds left, as Atlanta beat Washington after blowing an 18-point lead.

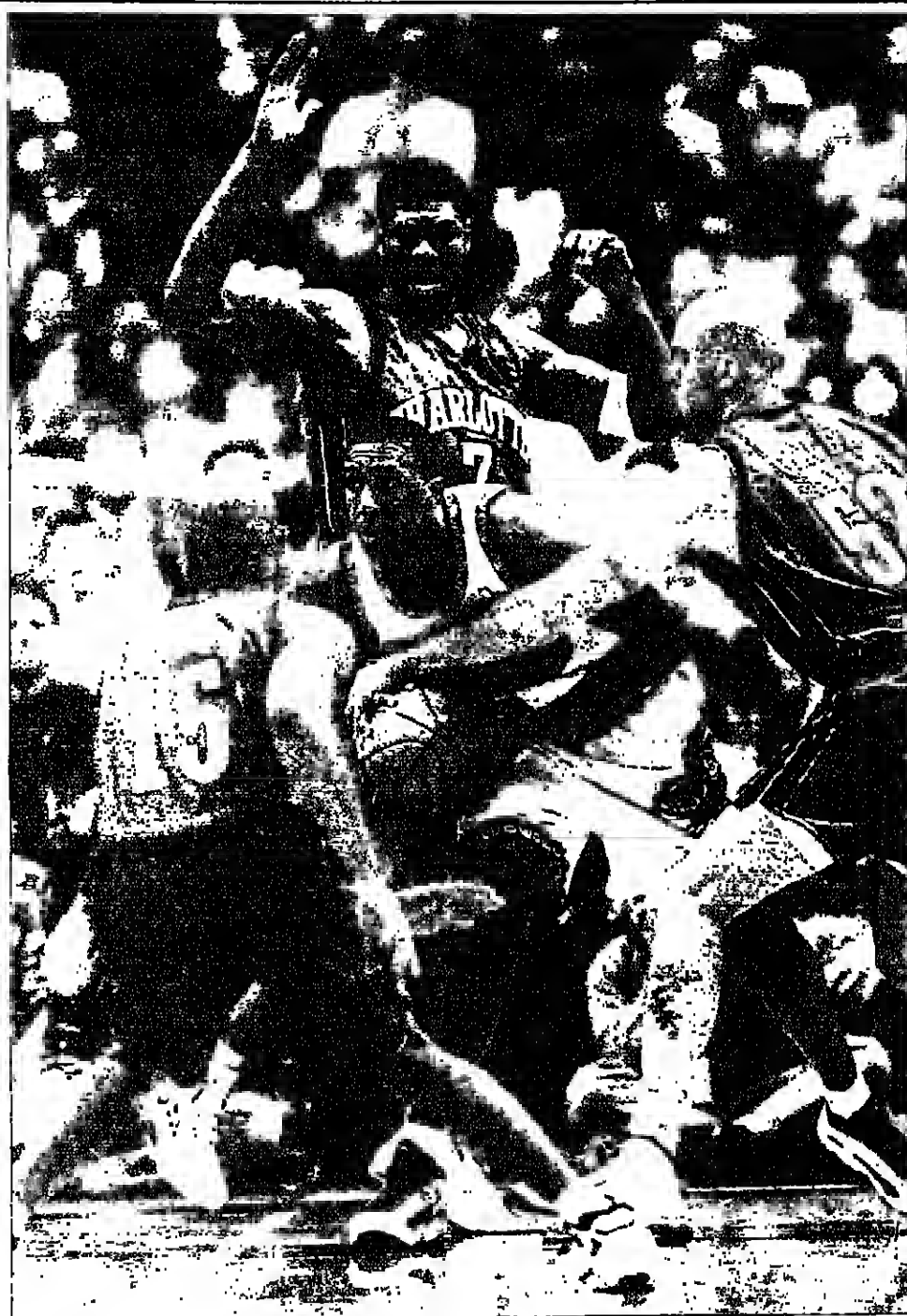
With the Hawks leading 78-77, Smith hit a 15-footer (5-metre shot) as the shot clock was running out.

After Washington's Chris Webber missed a 3-point shot with 10 seconds left, Calvin Cheaney of the Wizards got the rebound but was fouled while travelling.

Smith was fouled with 3.1 seconds remaining and made both free throws to clinch Atlanta's second consecutive victory after losing seven in a row.

Webber scored 20 points for Washington, which had its three-game winning streak snapped.

• Detroit Pistons 101, Golden State Warriors 72: At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Jerry Stackhouse scored 19



Vancouver Grizzlies' Shareef Abdul-Rahim (3) is swarmed on by Charlotte Hornets J.R. Reid (7), Corey Beck (15) and Matt Geiger (52) while trying to drive to the hoop during first half NBA action at General Motors Place in Vancouver (Reuters photo)

points as the Detroit Pistons routed the Golden State Warriors.

Grant Hill had 14 points, nine assists and four steals for Detroit. Malik Sealy also scored 14 points, while Jerome Williams had 12 rebounds in 20 minutes for the Pistons.

Joe Smith had 16 points and seven rebounds for Golden State, which made only 11 of 21 shots from the foul line.

The Pistons were 20-for-23 from the foul line and out rebounded the Warriors 51-36.

• Minnesota Timberwolves 96, Portland Trail Blazers 91: At Minneapolis, Stephon Marbury scored 27 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 44.4 seconds left, as Minnesota beat Portland.

Sam Mitchell added 20 points, including a tying jumper and two free throws in the final 1:13, as the Timberwolves defeated the Trail Blazers at home for just the third time in 18 games since joining the NBA in 1989.

It was the sixth win in eight games for the Wolves, who are just 5-30 against the Blazers. Portland has lost four of five.

Portland's Isaiah Rider

scored 32 points against his former team.

• Miami Heat 98, Denver Nuggets 79: At Denver, Alonzo Mourning had 25 points and 12 rebounds as the Miami Heat handed the Denver Nuggets their franchise-record 16th straight loss.

P.J. Brown added 19 points and Voshon Lenard had 14 for the Heat.

Mourning's jumper with 3:30 left gave Miami a 90-75 lead. Lenard then hit a 3-pointer and the Heat went on to beat the Nuggets for the sixth straight time.

Laphonso Ellis led Denver with 19 points.

• Charlotte Hornets 98, Vancouver Grizzlies 90: At Vancouver, British Columbia, Glen Rice scored 26 points as the Charlotte Hornets handed the Vancouver Grizzlies their ninth consecutive defeat.

After nine lead changes in the second half, the Hornets went up for good when Bobby Phillips hit a 3-point basket early in the fourth quarter.

Vlade Divac scored 14 of his 18 points in the second half for Charlotte. Anthony Mason had 15 points and 12 rebounds for the Hornets.

Abdul-Rahim scored 22 points for the Grizzlies, who have lost seven straight at

home.

• Phoenix Suns 100, San Antonio Spurs 79: At Phoenix, Rex Chapman and Antonio McDyess each scored 18 points, and the Phoenix Suns played a turnover-free game for three quarters to snap San Antonio's five-game winning streak.

Steve Nash scored 16 points for the Suns, who did not commit a turnover until McDyess lost the ball out of bounds trying a spin move on David Robinson early in the fourth period.

Chuck Person scored 16 points for San Antonio. Robinson had 15 points and 16 rebounds, and Tim Duncan had 15 points and nine rebounds.

• Los Angeles Lakers 125, Los Angeles Clippers 115: At Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal scored 23 of his 32 points in the first half as the Los Angeles Lakers took control on their way to beating the Los Angeles Clippers.

Eddie Jones added 27 points for the Lakers, who won for the fourth time in five games since O'Neal returned from an abdominal strain.

Clippers rookie Maurice Taylor scored a career-high 26 points before fouling out with 7:20 remaining.

Slovak Republic win Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — Rank outsiders the Slovak Republic completed a tennis fairytale here Saturday, beating second-seeded France in the final of the \$587,000 Hopman Cup tournament at the Burswood Dome.

Forced to play a qualifying match a week earlier to gain entry to the eight-nation contest, Karol Kucera and Karina Habsudova outgunned the fancied French pairing of Cedric Pioline and Mary Pierce in the showdown.

Kucera and his partner pocketed the winners' cheque of \$522,000 (\$143,000) when they won the decisive mixed doubles 6-3, 6-4 after the singles clashes had been shared.

"We played a great doubles match today when it really mattered," an elated Habsudova, 24, said. "We hadn't thought we would do this well but we tried our best and we came through."

Kucera said: "I knew we could beat anybody. Everything was open here. I knew we had a chance to get to the final — even though we were not among the first seven countries chosen for the contest."

Defeat came as a huge disappointment for the French, competing in the final for the first time after winning all three qualifying matches.

"It was very, very disappointing," said Pierce, the former Australian Open champion.

She strained a left hip muscle late in her winning singles clash with Habsudova and played in the final with the injury strapped, but refused to use

that as an excuse for France's failure.

"It was sore when I did it, but not too bad," she said. "I felt a bit of discomfort in the doubles and I was trying not to hurt it any more. But I still feel pretty good for the Australian Open."

French hopes soared when Pierce, 22, ranked seventh in the world, overcame a stubborn Habsudova, 24, ranked 29th, in straight sets in 100 minutes, winning 6-4, 7-5.

But Kucera, ranked 24th, revived the Slovak Republic's hopes when he upset Pioline, ranked 20th, 7-6 (9/11), 6-4 in straight sets in 99 minutes.

In the crucial doubles France were well in the picture until the sixth game of the opening set when Pioline dropped service.

France stormed back in the second set, in which each player dropped service once in the opening five games, to lead 3-1.

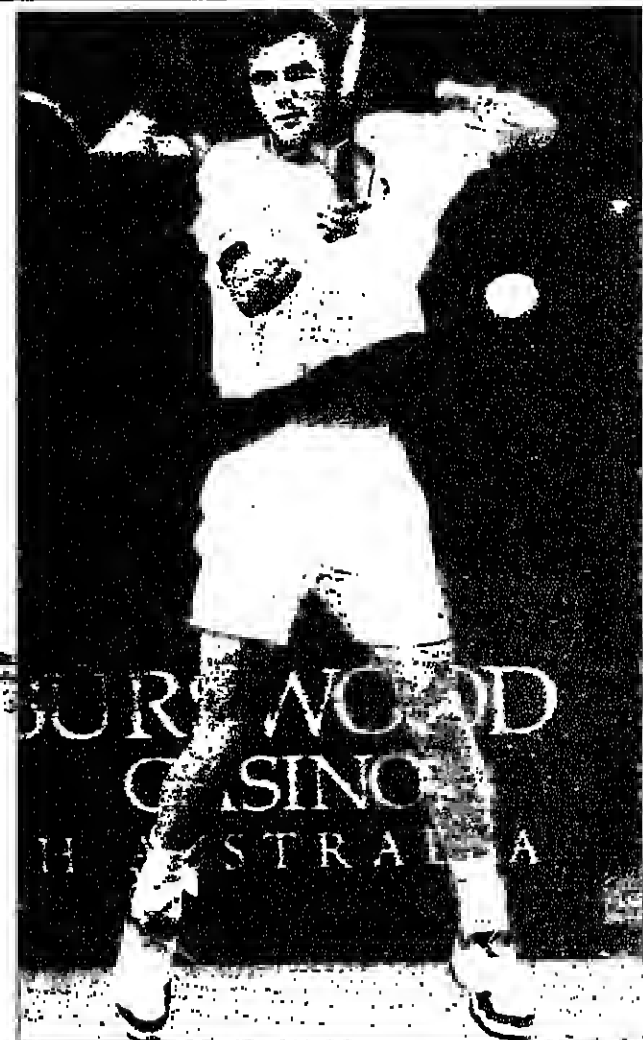
But the Slovak Republic fought back, broke Pierce in the seventh game and hung on.

Pierce said she would rest her injury for as long as was necessary, but did not believe this would be more than a few days.

"I hurt myself late in the second set when returning a serve," she said.

Pierce was the star woman of the tournament, winning all four matches and dropping only one set.

She beat Germany's Anke Huber, the United States' Chanda Rubin and South Africa's Amanda Coetzer.



Karol Kucera from Slovakia hits a forehand during his match against France's Cedric Pioline during the men's final of the tenth Hopman Cup in Perth Western Australia. Kucera beat Pioline 7-6, 6-4 (Reuters photo)

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A regional office based in Amman is seeking to employ a highly qualified Librarian on a short-term basis, with the following qualifications:

- Diploma in libraries science.
- Minimum 5 years experience in the same field with practical experience in setting up libraries.
- Knowledge of computer applications and Internet use in the field.
- Fluent in Arabic and English (French is an advantage).

Only qualified candidates are invited to send their detailed resume with a recent photo not later than January 24, 1998 to:

Personnel Officer,
P.O. Box 851673, Sweitiyeh,
Amman-11185, Jordan.



The Y.W.C.A. Community Choir Course in Note Reading and Choir Singing

The Y.W.C.A. Community Choir offers a free of charge course in note reading and choir singing for a period of three months effective Tuesday, January 13, 1998. Classes will be on Tuesdays from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. at the Y.W.C.A. premises, 3rd Circle, Jabal Amman.

This course is available for singers both experienced and inexperienced. New members who would like to join in preparation for the next Xmas-Concert need to audition prior to classes.

Please call:

641119 / 641793 for appointments.
Last date of accepting new members
would be Tuesday, January 20.

JORDAN TIMES E-MAIL: jotimes@go.com.jo

Russian-Israeli group eyes Turkey's top defence contract

ANKARA (AFP) — A newly-created Russian-Israeli consortium has joined four Western contenders in bidding for Turkey's \$4 billion attack helicopter tender in a surprising last-minute move, a Turkish government official said Saturday.

The strange bedfellows are Russia's Kamov and the Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI), which will compete in the Turkish deal with a modified version of the Russian company's latest design called Ka-52.

"Kamov, which last year said it would not compete for the deal, apparently changed its mind after silently securing a partnership with IAI, and submitted a joint proposal on December 31, the last day to enter our tender," the official told AFP.

Turkey last year opened an international tender to select a foreign partner with which it is planning to manufacture 145 attack helicopters for its army.

Another Russian helicopter maker, Rostvertol, builder of the Mi-24 and Mi-28, withdrew from the tender in an obvious move to raise the Kamov group's chances, the official said.

Other contenders in the deal, all Western, include the Franco-German consortium Eurocopter, maker of the Tiger helicopter; Italy's Agusta, maker of the Mangusta; the U.S. group Boeing, maker of the Apache; and the U.S. company Bell Helicopter Textron, maker of the Super Cobra.

"The unexpected last

minute bid by the Russian-Israeli group will be an irritating development for the U.S. and European companies."

'The unexpected last minute bid will be an irritating development for the U.S. and European companies'

pages of this latest Russian gunship design with Israel's high technology, their chances will be high," the source added.

The Turkish government is expected to announce the winner in the attack helicopter competition late this year or in early 1999.

A first contract is expected to cover 50 gunships and later the number is to increase to 145.

Production will be carried out at a plant here of Turkey's Tuzlas Aerospace Industries which is manufacturing F-16 fighter aircraft under U.S. licence for the Turkish air force, and will involve participation of several Turkish companies.

Turkey has announced it will spend some \$31 billion

for defence procurement over the next 10 years. The attack helicopter programme is its largest-scale project.

Israel, which only entered the Turkish defence market in 1996, has won or secured contracts here worth over \$800 million.

In the largest deal, IAI signed a \$630 million contract in November 1996 to upgrade Turkey's ageing fleet of 54 F-4E Phantom fighter bombers.

On Dec. 31, the Turkish government selected a consortium formed by IAI and a Singapore company to upgrade Turkey's 48 F-5 fighter aircraft, a deal worth \$75 million.

Israel's Rafael missile manufacturer is close to a \$100 million contract to sell Popeye air-to-surface precision-guided missiles to the Turkish air force. A second phase for joint production of the missiles is also under way.

Israel is also willing to sell its Merkava III tanks, Phalcoo airborne early warning systems and several other missile types to Turkey.

Arms sales by Russia, one of the world's largest weapons exporters, to Turkey have been limited to some \$300 million in recent years, including Mi-17 general purpose helicopters, armoured vehicles and Kalashnikov light arms.



FIRST TIME IMAGE OF SATURN'S AURORA: This is the first image of Saturn's ultraviolet aurora taken by the Space Telescope Imaging Spectrograph (STIS) on board the Hubble Space Telescope in October 1997, when Saturn was a distance of 1.3 billion kilometres from Earth. The new instrument, used as a camera, provides more than ten times the sensitivity of previous Hubble instruments and shows details never before seen in the spectacular auroral curtains of light that encircle Saturn's North and South poles and rise more than a thousand miles above the cloud tops. Saturn's auroral displays are caused by an energetic wind from the Sun that sweeps over the planet. The southern aurora is seen at lower right, the northern at upper left (Reuters photo)

Greek foreign minister tells EU to make a stand on 'genocide of Kurds'

ATHENS (AP) — Greece's foreign minister on Friday appealed to his Western counterparts to make a stand on what he described as Turkey's "genocide of the Kurds."

"I call on all my counterparts... to clarify their position on the genocide of the Kurds and on the bestial repression of their personal rights," Theodore Pangalos said after meeting with French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine.

The European Union (EU) has been inundated with a new wave of Kurdish immigrants leaving Turkey and making their way to Greece and Italy, and from there to other EU countries.

Germany has pressed Italy, Greece and Turkey to tighten their borders, fearing an influx of hundreds of Kurds into the country.

Comparing the flow of Kurdish refugees to the exodus of Jews from Nazi Germany just before World War II, Mr. Pangalos said that the countries which fail to act now "will, in a few years... have the same burden of shame and responsibility" as Western countries had for not taking more decisive action to prevent the Holocaust.

"The indifference of the West is reminiscent of the indifference... when at the end of the 1930s it was well-known in many

Western countries that Hitler had begun the genocide of the Jews, without these countries doing anything," he said.

Mr. Pangalos added that Turkey must prove it is "dealing politically with the Kurdish problem."

Greek coast guard officers on Friday picked up 69 illegal immigrants; most of them Kurds, from the eastern Aegean island of Simi, media reports said.

Most of the recent wave of immigrants towards the EU have been Kurds from northern Iraq, where rival factions have fought since the end of the Gulf war. Turkey also makes frequent incursions into northern

Iraq to destroy rebel bases.

A smaller number are Turkish Kurds who are often caught in battles between the Turkish army and separatist rebels in the southeastern part of the country. Kurdish rebels have been pressing for autonomy in the southeast since 1984, a conflict that has killed roughly 37,000 people.

Kurds are a major ethnic group straddling four Middle Eastern countries, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Their total number is estimated at around 20 million, of which 12 million live in mainly Turkey's southeast.

Iraq accuses U.S. military of raising tension in Gulf

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused U.S. President Bill Clinton on Saturday of stoking tension in the Gulf by refusing to withdraw the heavy U.S. military presence in the area.

"By massing hostile forces in the area, the Clinton administration is trying to threaten the security of Iraq and take revenge on its people for defying American oppression," said an information

ministry spokesman, widely quoted in the press here.

He added that the U.S. was also trying to "maintain tension in the Gulf so as to seal new arms deals with countries in the region."

"American President Bill Clinton's obstinacy in maintaining his aggressive military presence in the region has nothing to do with U.N. resolutions," he added.

A Pentagon spokesman said

Thursday that Washington had no plans to scale back its military presence in the Gulf in the coming weeks, and that two aircraft carriers would remain there.

A total of 29,800 U.S. servicemen are deployed in the Gulf region, mostly aboard 22 warships sent to the Gulf in November amid a stand-off between Baghdad and United Nations arms inspectors.

Iranian newspaper urges Clinton to address Iranians to explain 'policy'

TEHRAN (AFP) — A conservative Iranian newspaper on Saturday called on U.S. President Bill Clinton to give an interview to the Iranian media to explain 50 years of "vile" U.S. foreign policy.

Quds (Jerusalem) said President Clinton should follow the example of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami who earlier this week made a direct address to the American people in a lengthy interview with CNN.

"After the message of our president to the American people, the people of Iran are now expecting an interview from Mr. Clinton with an Iranian media, preferably television, to ask him clear questions about the vile atti-

tude of American leaders during the last five decades," said the paper.

"Our people are expecting an Iranian media, in a frank and courageous interview with Mr. Clinton, to put across to the American people the message of this great feeling of hurt," said Quds.

"Will such an opportunity be given to the Iranian media?" asked the paper. President Khatami called for "dialogue and understanding between two nations" in the CNN interview and proposed broadening exchanges between "professors, writers, scholars, artists, journalists and tourists."

He broke a number of taboos, notably expressing regret that the feelings of American people were hurt

by the seizure of their diplomats in Tehran in 1979 during the Islamic revolution.

He also denounced the practice of burning the U.S. flag and insisted that slogans of "Death to America" were not directed at the American people or the government, "but the mode of relations" which existed between the arch-foes.

Tehran and Washington have been at daggers drawn since the 1979 revolution, with Iran calling the U.S. "Great Satan" and "Great Arrogance."

The U.S. has in return accused Iran of funding terrorism and attempting to acquire a nuclear arsenal, and has pushed for the Islamic Republic's total international isolation.

Bahrain slams Britain for harbouring 'terrorist groups'

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain criticised Britain Saturday for providing refuge to Bahraini opposition leaders and said it will demand their extradition.

"We deplore the attitude of Britain, which harbours terrorist groups," Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammad bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, was quoted in the newspaper Akhbar Al Khaleej as saying.

The British government said it will promulgate a law banning the use of British territory as a base for groups whose goal is to foment sedition acts in other countries, and we expect it to fulfill its promises," he said.

Sheikh Khalifa said that "the matter concerns all Arabs, not just Bahrain."

Mother convicted of misdemeanour in death of her obese teenager

OAKLAND (AFP) — The mother of a 308-kilo teenager who died on her living room floor from extreme obesity was convicted Friday of misdemeanour child abuse.

Superior Court Judge Richard Aranson said there was "passive misconduct" on the part of Marlene Corrigan, 48. The ruling means she will probably receive no prison time when she returns for sentencing next month.

Ms. Corrigan's only reaction after the ruling was to say "good" to her attorney before exiting quietly from the courtroom without speaking to waiting reporters.

The 13-year-old girl's death, her lonely life and the case against her mother attracted international attention. Fat activists rallied to the mother's defence, arguing the case

reflected prejudice against fat people.

"This is a mother who had a daughter with a chronic and probably fatal illness," said Laurie Saunders, an attorney with Ms. Corrigan's defence team. She said the mother "didn't make any mistakes" with her daughter.

Prosecutors sought a felony child abuse conviction, saying that Ms. Corrigan endangered her daughter's life by failing to properly care for her when Christina became so large that she refused to leave the house.

Ms. Corrigan could have faced up to six years in jail under felony child abuse charges sought by prosecutors. Although she faces up to a year in prison, her attorneys hope she will receive only probation.

Christina died in her Martinez, California home 50

kilometres south of here on Nov. 19, 1996 of congestive heart failure caused by morbid obesity.

Police reported finding her sprawled on the living room floor in her home, surrounded by empty food containers and covered with bed sores, with faeces trapped between folds of her flesh.

Ms. Corrigan's attorneys argued that the teen probably suffered from a genetic problem, Prader-Willi syndrome, causing her to eat voraciously. An autopsy was not done, so it will never be known for sure, Ms. Saunders said. Police photos of Christina were distributed among officials involved with the case, eliciting expressions of shock. They were deemed so ghastly that the defence asked for a judge — instead of a jury — to decide the case.

Khatami's interview provokes public debate on ties with U.S.

By Afshin Valinejad
Associated Press

TEHRAN — President Mohammad Khatami's ground breaking call for exchanges with the United States has provoked a lively debate in Iran on the question of resuming ties with the land long-dubbed "the great Satan."

Hard-line newspapers came out Saturday against re-forging diplomatic relations with the United States, with at least one editorial explicitly criticising President Khatami for his friendly comments toward America.

But moderate publications warmed toward ties with America, and received surprising support from former

radical opponents of the U.S.

In his interview with the Cable News Network (CNN) Wednesday, President Khatami called for a range of cultural exchanges with the U.S., but stopped short of proposing a government to government dialogue.

Although Iranian television broadcast the interview twice on Thursday, newspapers were slow to react, apparently waiting for the move to be digested by their mentors in the establishment.

The U.S. severed ties with Tehran after Islamists stormed the American embassy in Tehran in 1979 in a fit of revolutionary fervour against the country that had long backed the just-deposed

Shah.

Washington has frozen billions of dollars of Iranian funds and accuses Iran of sponsoring terrorism and trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Iran denies the charges.

On Saturday, Behzad Nabavi, a former revolutionary spokesman well-known for his anti-American views, argued in the Farsi-language Iran newspaper that ties with the U.S. were possible if Iran remained independent.

"We believe that we can have relations with any country, including the U.S., if we are strong enough to protect our national interests," Mr. Nabavi wrote.

The front page of the Aban weekly magazine ran the ban-

ner headline in huge red letters: "Why worry? Direct talks with America."

Aban's tone implied that talks were upcoming.

"Our goal is to bring the agenda of the talks to the people and to keep them informed," said the magazine. Aban published a letter from a reader who went so far as to suggest a referendum on relations with the U.S.

The Salam newspaper, run by the head of the students who took over the U.S. embassy, praised President Khatami's call for a rapprochement as an "innovative move in foreign policy" that had "secured the interests of the nation."

But the hard-line newspaper Jomhuri Eslami con-

demned Mr. Khatami's overtures. It said ties with the U.S. were not possible without an American apology for "fifty years of insults and aggressions."

The Farsi-language Jomhuri Eslami also criticised Mr. Khatami's interview, condemning his praise for American people and culture and his near-apology for the takeover of the American embassy.

President Khatami told CNN he considered America to be a great nation and expressed regret at the embassy takeover during which 52 American were kept hostage for 444 days.

Hard-liners view the embassy takeover as one of the highlights of the revolu-

tion and celebrate its anniversary.

Whatever the opinion, nobody could deny that the debate itself showed a big leap forward in Iranian tolerance.

Iran's culture minister was once so harshly condemned for advocating talks with the U.S. that he had to publicly retract his statement.

Mr. Khatami's landslide election victory in May gave him the mandate he needed to try and change Iran's foreign policy.

More than half of Iranians are too young to remember the Shah. For them, "Death to America," the slogan of the revolution, has little resonance.

The U.S. State Department

welcomed the "new tone" set by President Khatami, but rejected the Iranian president's hostile characterisations of U.S. foreign policy and of Israel as a "racist, terrorist regime."

State Department spokesman James Rubin said the administration will take a "serious, hard look" at President Khatami's proposals for expanded cultural exchanges.

After Mr. Khatami's inauguration in August, the United States sent a letter through Swiss diplomats to Iran proposing face-to-face talks, the Washington Post reported Friday. The newspaper said it had no details of a reply, if there was one.

Stolen homing pigeons take flight home

FINGRINGHOE (AFP) — Four valuable homing pigeons stolen three months ago have flown back to their master, one by one, escaping the clutches of their captors. The pigeons not only took advantage of high winds buffeting Britain this week to escape through an open window or door, owner Keith Turner said. The first to show his beak at home was "First Blue," whose reappearance Sunday was followed Monday by that of his siblings "Alto Choice" and "Fourth Star." Last but not least was "Daniel," a pigeon valued at some \$45,000 who had been the other three. All four had been stolen in October.

Early Rolling Stones recordings rediscovered

LONDON (AP) — Early radio recordings of the Rolling Stones, hidden away for nearly 35 years, could be the airwaves again if the BBC and the rock superstars agree. The BBC, which holds the 1963-1965 recordings in its archives, said it is discussing with the Rolling Stones the possibility of releasing them. The broadcaster owns the recordings and the group owns the performances. The Independent newspaper, whose reporter listened to "20 tracks of assorted interviews" by the Stones, said they were "fascinating, raw, and blues and rock 'n' roll moments of surprising tenderness."

Sailing craft gather for Cousteau memorial

PUNTA DEL ESTE (AP) — Some 500 sailing craft gathered in the South Atlantic resort of Punta Del Este Sunday for a ceremony honouring French underwater explorer Jacques Cousteau. The ceremony, on the 50th anniversary of the sinking of Cousteau's ship Calypso off the coast of Singapore, was organised by Uruguay's painter and sailor Carlos Vilario. "I've deeply admired Cousteau, who has inspired me first at every port in the world where I've docked," Vilario said. The boats sailed from the port and past Paetz Vilario's beach house where a plaque will be unveiled. Paetz Vilario said it will be a silent procession of love for Cousteau.

Roseanne files for divorce

LOS ANGELES (AP) — had to happen. Roseanne filed for divorce from Tom Thomas, her former bodyguard and husband of 10 years. She filed the papers Thursday at the Los Angeles Superior Court citing a well-worn motive of "irreconcilable differences." Rumours have it that the 45-year-old comedienne came on "Year's Eve when Thomas came home rather drunk and overwrought. Nobody knew for sure what happened. The Los Angeles police did confirm that Roseanne requested an emergency order of protection. Thomas, Roseanne's third husband, actor Tom Arnold.

Thief drops vase worth \$385,000

TOKYO (AP) — An artist made an expensive blunder while fleeing from a Japanese museum — he dropped a fragile, 600-year-old Chinese plate in an old Chinese plate in a road. The 48 Ming dynasty plate, the centrepiece of an exhibit at the Yamato Museum, was worth an estimated \$385,000. The Uematsu, deputy chief of police in Ito, said. Despite the fumbling, the thief didn't get away empty-handed. He was on a pair of Sung dynasty vases worth \$38,500.